ST. CLAIR OF THE ISLES;

OR,

THE OUTLAWS' REVENGE.

A ROMANCE OF THE WESTERN ISLES.

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LONDON: [illegible] AVE MARIA LANE, [illegible] ROW.
1824

ST. CLAIR OF THE ISLES.

CHAPTER I.

"BREAK, ye rude waves of the Northern Sea! Break on the tower of M'Leod. Like the rock on which it is founded, it mocks your efforts. Lonely and forsaken, its halls are desolate, and its chambers the retreat of birds. Soon, soon shall they afford refuge to the eagle, who under his wing shall rear the bloody arm on which shall hang the fate of Scotland."

Rising from one of his prophetic dreams, thus spoke the seer of Roskelyn Glen.

Again entranced he lay, and then wildly starting, he added—"And ye lofty turrets of Roskelyn's wide domain, your pride shall bow, till the disgrace of your ancient house becomes its highest glory."

He ceased for some moments, then again exclaimed—"Ah, me! sad sight! on what a field of blood will shine the glorious sun! See! the parties meet! hark to the clashing of their spears! they strike, they sink, they fall! again they rise; again renew the attack with more than mortal fury!—they bleed!—their spears are broken! they draw their swords! their armour is cleft in twain! the bloody arm triumphs, and Scotland is once more free from the tyrant yoke of England."

Such was the vision that intruded itself on the ancient seer, who, faint and powerless, when nature recovered her usual tone, craved a draught of water from two youthful shepherds who had heard the prophetic utterances, then prayed them to lead him to his home. There stretched on his couch, he endeavoured to collect his wandering spirit.

The seer composed to rest, the shepherds left him. "Donald," said Robert, as they walked forward, "what think you of what we have heard? I pray ye heed it well."

"I will," answered Donald. "When the spirit speaks thus in inspired men, we should indeed mark it; but a close mouth makes a wise head. The prediction seemed to allude, in part, to the house of our noble lord, and to mention that, might involve us in ruin."

"Troth might it; let us consult the holy monk of Inveresk. He will advise us for the best."

"Right, Robert; we will away thither. The seer spoke of the tower of M'Leod,—know ye where that is situated?"

"Not in the Lowlands," answered Donald. "The seer himself is of the western isles—'tis probably there; but what think ye of the eagle who shall rear the bloody arm?"

"Nay, I know not."

Thus conversing, they reached the chapel of Inveresk, where they relieved their minds to the monk. He heard them with attention, and having taken their depositions down in writing, dismissed them with his blessing.

CHAPTER II.

During the later years of James I. of Scotland, in an ancient fortress, situated in the island of Barra,* resided St Clair Monteith, an outlaw. Young, open, and generous, he was universally beloved, not only by the poor inhabitants of Barra, but throughout the other islands which he sometimes visited, and from whence the power of James himself could scarcely, against his will, have forced him.

St Clair Monteith, or St Clair of the Isles, as he was more commonly called, was, at the period of his outlawry, not more than twenty-two. He had been bred and trained to arms by his uncle Monteith, who, at his death, left him considerable possessions in the south of Scotland, but these, on his outlawry, had been seized, and the produce devoted to the use of his enemies. Confined by the royal mandate, to the isle of Barra, he had taken up his residence in an old fortress, called the tower of M'Leod, where, could he have forgotten past events, he might have lived happily, for he had four companions, well-born and valiant, who had voluntarily shared his misfortunes and disgrace. To these, at different times, others in similar circumstances, though without the sentence of the law, had joined; so that St Clair wanted neither commanders nor men, for in his companions he had chiefs, and in every islander a willing soldier. The money he had brought to the island on his first outlawry he had spread with a liberal hand. The court of Scotland well knew his power; but as he was peaceable, no means were used to check it, either from fear or prudence.

The outlaws were, Sir James Ross, a valiant knight and noble gentleman, the companion of St Clair's youthful days, and the sworn friend of his riper years; Allan Hamilton, a similar character, learned and reflective, a disposition which he had yet more cultivated since his residence at Barra; the Chevalier de Bourg, a French knight, generous and volatile, who, involved in St Clair's disgrace, had voluntarily shared his captivity, rather than attempt an escape to his native country, and James M'Gregor, bold, undaunted, and revengeful where he was displeased, but willing to sacrifice life and fortune in the cause of honour or friendship. These, as well as St Clair, were bachelors.

The characters who had at different times joined them were, in general, men of talent, and well-born, who had left their country either from difference of political opinion, family quarrels, or other cause, and as the name and character of St Clair were well known, had enlisted under his banner. These last amounted to twelve; the whole inhabitants making seventeen.

* One of the Hebrides.

CHAPTER III.

"FILL your goblets; nay, fill to the brim, my pledge is—May the generous soul prosper, and the oppressor sink into deserved infamy! Nay, drink to the dregs; for, though we are outlaws, we are men. From eighteen to twenty-one the world plundered and laughed at me; now, though they still plunder me, they tremble at my name, for fear of what may come. At the final account, which priests say we must all give, let the widow I have wronged, the orphan I have oppressed, or the virgin I have betrayed, stand forth and bruit it in my face."

"Your inclinations, St Clair, did not naturally lead to these points," answered the Chevalier de Bourg; but woe to you, if broken heads and an invincible spirit are included in the acts of condemnation! Never since you were sixteen have I seen you so quietly inclined, as since James did us the favour of ordering us here."

"The reason is obvious," replied St Clair; "from my earliest youth my heart was alive to gratitude; and do not our poor neighbours here, and the inhabitants of the adjacent isles, all love and regard us? I am, therefore, careful to support a conduct proper to justify their opinion; and, by my soul! if I knew one among us stoop to meanness or dishonour, my voice and arm should be the first to banish him from our society."

"Your wishes have hitherto been our law, and strictly observed," answered one of the number.

"'Tis well! and thus, in our old dwelling here, we are as secure as in a strongly defended castle, for there is not one of our neighbours but would fight, bleed, or die for us."

"True," said M'Gregor; "yet I have often thought that it would be prudent to repair our fortress, and increase our numbers. James may not always be so pacific, and in case of danger we are but seventeen."

"Perish the thought!" replied St Clair; "in all our contests hitherto, seventeen men have been enough for victory, and in case we fall, seventeen men are enough to die."

"True," said Ross, "yet M'Gregor advises well; your enemies are powerful, and will never think themselves secure while you live."

"Perhaps so," answered St Clair, "but my unhappy fortune has already involved too many of my friends. Our die is cast and must be abided; and as for those gentlemen who have voluntarily joined us, like ourselves, I surmise, they have some strong quarrel with the world; but for the islanders, they have none. Let them vegetate in happy obscurity; labour and peace for them—the battle of life and jollity for us; but see, the goblets stand; drink round—drown reflection."

The party drank. "I am of St Clair's opinion," said Hamilton; "we are inmates enough for peace, and in case of danger, the standard of St Clair would collect an army."

"For men," said De Bourg, "act as you please, I am as willing to fight, nay, to die in a good cause as another; but for a Frenchman of my age and constitution to be stewed up, like a monk in a cell, is too much. A few women now would render all easy."

"Women," repeated St Clair; "are ye tired of quiet that ye name them? No, we will have no mistresses but the bottle—no crime but drunkenness."

"St Clair is right," answered Hamilton; "women would but breed contention, and more men confusion. If we live like monks, at least we are merry ones, and our penance is easy."

"Well observed," said one of the party, who had lately come to the island; "from you I expected as much, but from St Clair far otherwise. Had ye never mothers, or did ye never love?"

"A mother I undoubtedly had," replied St Clair—a burning blush mantling through his dark complexion, and overshadowing his manly features, "but she was a wolf. Like other fools, too, I fell in love—that is, the glittering crest of a serpent caught my eye, and I pursued it till it fixed a sting in my heart. For a while I yielded to my folly, but at length, calling reason to my aid, I plucked the venom from my heart."

The horn at the gate of the fortress at that moment gave notice of strangers, who proved to be some herdsmen from Lochaber, from whom St Clair had purchased oxen and sheep, for the value of which he had given an order on an agent near Edinburgh, but who had declined accepting the draft, saying that he had received orders from the Earl of Roskelyn to disregard any such as might be sent him from St Clair, whose estate the king had awarded to his sole use.

St Clair rose hastily from the table, his face flushed with anger, and his eyes sparkling with indignation. "The miscreant!" exclaimed he, "by my soul, I will once more proclaim him villain, even to the tyrant's face. With the first fair wind I will away to Scotland, and retrieve mine own, or die."

Ross, Hamilton, De Bourg, and M'Gregor laid their hands upon their swords: "Let good or ill befall," exclaimed they in one voice, "we go with you."

"Nay, we will all go," added some of the party that had joined them.

St Clair looked affectionately round him. "Do not unman me," said he. "The present quarrel is mine only, and I alone will meet it."

"By my honour you shall not," replied Ross; "if you resolve to brave destruction, I will share the danger."

The whole party interrupted Ross with a cry to the same purport.

"Men, friends," exclaimed St Clair, "can you wish me to live dishonoured, that you use the only means that can dissuade me from my purpose?"

"No," replied M'Gregor, "but prudence is sometimes better than courage: to go now to the court of Scotland would be to die the death of fools. Preserve your life, then, and that of your friends, for a better cause than petty animosity."

"And let the villain Roskelyn revel in my wealth, and even refuse to pay those just debts which necessity forces me to contract?"

"Could you gratify your enemies more than by subjecting yourself to the penalty annexed to your returning from your outlawry?" asked Hamilton.

St Clair paused. "I will think till to-morrow," answered he; "Monteith must live with honour or he must cease to live."

One of the party, named Randolph, who was intimately acquainted with all St Clair's misfortune, then spoke. He was elder brother to M'Gregor, of the same character, but more deeply coloured.

"The tide of passion must have its way," said he, "and those who attempt to stem its course may be likened to those who reason with

madmen. St Clair, we all know, values not his own life, but he will be careful of those of his friends. Ross, Hamilton, De Bourg, and M'Gregor, must therefore remain with him in Barra. For me, held here by no law, unknown at the court of James, and a stranger to John of Roskelyn, I am a proper messenger to carry St Clair's demand. Myself, and another in similar circumstances, will repair to the south with his order; and from the result of our errand he can form his future designs."

All approved of this measure except St Clair, but the danger of his friends abated his ardour, and made him deliberate on the subject.

"For this time give way," said Ross, "if Randolph brings not back an-answer to your wishes, we will raise the men of the islands, and away to Scotland; call together the vassals of your uncle's house, those of mine, and of all our friends; then claim our freedom, rights, and property; obtain them, or perish in the attempt."

This arrangement was so warmly seconded, that Monteith was forced to yield, and that perhaps the more willingly, as he conceived that Randolph, being a stranger, incurred no danger. All the party who were free, claimed the privilege of accompanying Randolph, who, at length, instead of one companion, was obliged to accept of three. They, having made provision for the journey, and being well armed, resolved to adventure with the first fair wind to Scotland, in one of the fishing-boats that lay on the coast.

In the intervening time, a private consultation had taken place between Ross, Hamilton, M'Gregor, and Randolph, in which the three first empowered the last to claim, on their respective estates, what sums of money were due to them and to give their discharge; for the property of Monteith, as principal, had alone been confiscated.

CHAPTER IV.

ALL being prepared, Randolph and his companions, simply clothed, as men of common rank, departed, St Clair giving them a letter to this purport, addressed to the agent:—

"Whereas, I some time since sent an order on you for the payment of twenty marks, which sum you have refused to discharge; this is to command the payment of sixty, a small sum compared to what you have of mine in your hands; see therefore that it be paid, or I shall be necessitated to enforce the demand in person at once from the villain who usurps my right, and from you the despicable tool of his treachery."

The journey, after they reached the mainland of Scotland, was long; but they lost no time on their way, and reaching Edinburgh, they presented St Clair's letter to the agent. He perused it with visible emotion; but carefully examining the messengers, and finding nothing in their personal appearance to alarm his fears, he answered them haughtily, ordering them to attend on the morrow at Roskelyn.

"Troth, master, will we," replied Randolph, assuming a language suitable to his habit, "and I hope you will then dispatch our business, for we are not used to dance attendance, like courtly lackeys, and cannot easily brook it. We ask, I presume, nothing but what is the brave St Clair's right, and it would not be honest or mannerly to refuse it, as that might give him the trouble to come himself."

"Insolent varlet," replied Carnegie; "know you that St Clair dares not show his face in Scotland under forfeiture of his life!"

"Marry, I know not the place where St Clair dares not show his face; and for his life, whoever attempts that, with all submission, will rouse a hornet's nest."

"Do you threaten, villain?" said Carnegie.

"Marry, Heaven forbid!" answered Randolph; "we poor lads of the isles are not given to threaten; we are not courtiers, masters, we are more for deeds than words."

Carnegie viewed the party suspiciously. "I will consult the lord of Roskelyn," said he; "meet me at his castle to morrow at noon."

So saying, he left them; and they retired to procure rest and refreshment.

Careful to their appointment, Randolph and his companions reached Roskelyn at the appointed hour. For a considerable time they waited in the outward court, subjected to the gaze and rude jests of the lackeys. At length they were summoned into the great hall, where sat the lord of Roskelyn, and his haughty, but beautiful countess, surrounded by a numerous train of ladies and attendants.

Judging by the rudeness of the strangers' appearance, they were astonished to see them show no signs of admiration or restraint at the grandeur and pomp around them: for Randolph entered with a careless unembarrassed air, his cap upon his head, and his left arm wrapped in his plaid."

"You come from the outlaw St Clair," said the earl; "know you the consequence of making a demand of property no longer his: ever mine by right, but now mine both by justice and the will of the king!"

"Marry, I understand not that," replied Randolph; it may however be the courtly fashion; but in the isles, no king has a right to rob a man of his own"

"Rude clown," said Carnegie, who stood at a humble distance from the earl, "know you to whom you speak thus rudely, and in whose presence you stand, that you do not move your cap!"

"I speak to John of Roskelyn, I trow; I told you before, I knew no courtly fashions. I wear my cap, for I took cold by waiting so long among the lackeys in the entry."

"The lackeys are surely good enough company for thee," said the Lady Roskelyn; "but thou hast learned insolence from thy employers."

"I came not to talk with women," replied Randolph; I am afraid of their tongues. Will the demand of St Clair be paid?"

"It will not," answered Roskelyn; "and mark my words, rogue—if thou dost not depart hence immediately, I will punish thee for thy insolence."

"Punish me!" repeated Randolph; "if all rogues were punished, honest men would have their right."

"Wilt thou, once more I repeat, take thy answer and begone, ere I punish thee for thy daring!"

"A time will come for repentance for all," answered Randolph contemptuously, throwing down his glove.

So saying, without waving his cap, or bending his body, he and his companions prepared to leave the room.

"Come back," cried Roskelyn.

"What meanest thou by throwing down thy glove? Thou surely, hind as thou art, dost not carry thy insolence far enough to defy me!"

"I mean," answered Randolph, "that who will may pick it up; and should any one defy me, though it were even John of Roskelyn, I would answer as a man."

"Villain; thou art not what thou seemest," exclaimed Roskelyn.

"My good lord," said the countess, "why lose your temper with this wretch? Give him in charge to your vassals: in the prison of the castle, let him learn respect."

"In the halls of the castle; nay lady, in your bridal chamber, learn you that she who prostitutes her person, though under the sanction of marriage, is little better than a harlot."

"Insufferable insolence!" exclaimed Roskelyn; "seize these men, they are not what they seem, and public tranquillity may require them to be punished."

"And who will punish us?" replied Randolph; "not John of Roskelyn, I trow; his fears won't let him, whatever his inclination may be. Come, lead the way," continued he, addressing his companions; "the air of this perfumed hall is too heavy for me. I love a purer atmosphere."

"Away with him; I will hear no more," cried Roskelyn.

"Marry, but you will, and shortly too."

The attendants prevented more, by attempting to seize Randolph and his companions; but drawing their broad-swords from under their garments, they cleared the way to the gates, where, mounting their horses, they soon lost sight of the towers of Roskelyn, and using their utmost speed, reached the Frith of Forth, which, having crossed, they proceeded to Perth, where they refreshed themselves and their beasts, considering themselves secure from the pursuit of Roskelyn.

The business they had to transact for Ross, Hamilton, and M'Gregor, now alone prevented their return to the island. That of Ross was in the shire of Inverness; that of M'Gregor nearly in the same place; and Hamilton's near where they then were.

A few days completed the last named; they then journeyed to Inverness, and received various sums for Ross; but the person Randolph was the most anxious to see, was his elder brother, Sir Alexander M'Gregor, who at this time happened to be absent as far distant as Teviotdale, upon the English borders.

Randolph's wish, however, to see him, was not solely on account of pecuniary concerns, but also to consult him on the measures the outlaws should pursue, as he had no doubt but St Clair would be deaf to all but revenge.

After consulting with his companions, they dispatched a trusty messenger to Barra, to inform St Clair that their absence would be unavoidably protracted two months longer; but palliating as much as possible the conduct of Roskelyn; and intreating him to bear all with patience until their return, which was only delayed by their wish to consult Sir Alexander M'Gregor on the proper steps to pursue.

This point arranged, they departed for the south, and reaching Teviotdale, met with the elder M'Gregor.

A wary politician, as well as a brave warrior, Sir Alexander for the present disapproved all hostile measures, as he conceived they must ultimately end in ruin. "St Clair's cause is just, and I would willingly

hazard my life to reinstate him in his right; but let us act with prudence, and though we delay the blow, let it be decisive when it falls."

As Alexander M'Gregor meant speedily to return to the Highlands, Randolph and his companions awaited his leisure, in order to accompany him; so that their stay from Barra was prolonged to nearly four months.

All being prepared, they took their way homeward; the elder M'Gregor with four domestics, and Randolph and his companions, in all forming a company of nine.

On the second evening, passing a desolate and extensive moor, they encountered a horseman, his clothes and accoutrements emblazoned with the arms of the house of Roskelyn.

Questioning him, they learned that he was in the service of the dowager countess of Roskelyn, and that that lady followed, having her grandson in charge. As he rode on, Randolph made a stop, and exclaimed—

"Brother, revenge is in our power. St Clair shall be free, for you will not surely refuse to join in a plan that cannot fail to liberate him."

"I see none that is at present likely to effect that purpose," said M'Gregor: "if you depend on the dowager of Roskelyn, she is among the greatest of his enemies."

"I know that well—I expect nothing from her; but what think you of making the young Montrose the hostage for his father's honour?"

"By mine honour 'tis a noble daring if it could be done with safety."

"Safety!" repeated Randolph; "armed as we are, we need not fear treble our number; the night draws on, too, and our persons are unknown: and for the present, it will only be surmised an incursion of the English for the sake of ransom."

M'Gregor, after some consideration, agreed to the plan; and calling his party together, they were made acquainted with the scheme, and sworn to secrecy.

The business was scarcely arranged when the cavalcade approached; four horsemen rode before the litter, six behind, and two on each side; a number thought fully adequate, as the country was then at peace. Randolph, as projector of the plan, rode first, and ordered them to halt, which they refused; but rushing forward, he in a moment threw down the driver, and a scene of confusion ensued; for uncertain of the strength of their assailants, their fears, and the darkness of the night multiplied their number.

"Let no man stir," exclaimed Randolph; "we mean no injury; our business is a few words with the countess."

The domestics were true to their trust, until seeing some of their companions fall an easy prey to the superior skill and valour of Randolph and his party, they fled, or crying for mercy, threw down their arms. Randolph then approached the litter, in which was seated the Dowager of Roskelyn and three female attendants, one of whom held the young Montrose upon her knees, in so sound a sleep that all the confusion had not awakened him.

The Lady Roskelyn was busied in taking off her bracelets and jewels to present to the supposed robbers, but putting back her hand, Randolph said—

"Keep your trinkets, lady, the young lord of Roskelyn is our aim.

He shall, however, be safely returned for ransom, and carefully nurtured during the intervening time."

So saying, he stretched out his arms for the child, but Lady Roskelyn, throwing herself on her knees, entreated him to relinquish his purpose. Her prayers were vain, for Randolph was deaf to her entreaties, and callous to her tears; and ordering the trembling woman who held the child to reach him, she reluctantly complied. Wrapping the infant in his cloak, and pressing him to his breast, he said to the lady—

"Fear not for the boy, for interest will keep him safe. Farewell!"

"Say, then, where you bear him," exclaimed she, in an agony of grief, "that the ransom may be sent."

"To England; rest satisfied with the promise obtained."

So saying, he gave the word to his companions, who, turning their horses, retook their way towards the English border, the better to baffle pursuit.

After a journey of some miles, the party, concealed between two mountains, sent forward one of their companions to procure wine, meat, and bread, which Randolph offered the infant when he awoke at daybreak.

Looking round, the boy cried bitterly, but in a short time appeared sensible of the caresses of his hardy nurse, examined him carefully, played with his sword, and at length took the food offered him.

"By mine honour," said Sir Alexander, laughing, "nature made a strange mistake when she deemed thee a warrior, for thou art one of the most expert nurses I ever saw."

"By Heaven!" exclaimed Randolph, "if not corrupted by the court, and the pride and arrogance of his family, I'll warrant he'll be a noble fellow; he drinks wine already like an outlaw: methinks he resembles St Clair."

After more conversation of the same nature, they all partook of refreshment, then remounting their horses, they took the way to Dumfries. Hence they proceeded to Kirkcudbright, where, finding a vessel bound for Port-Patrick, they immediately embarked, and with a fair wind reached Ireland.

Here they engaged a nurse to attend the child, and procured a vessel to convey them to Barra, leaving Sir Alexander and his attendants, who, after remaining a few weeks in Ireland, returned to his paternal home.

During this interval, the news of the loss of the child had reached his parents. Messengers were dispatched in all quarters in order to obtain information, and particularly to England, where they had no doubt he had been conveyed; for the most distant idea of his being taken for the purpose of liberating St Clair never intruded: and though the Earl of Roskelyn had no doubt but Randolph and his companions were not what their dress appeared to denote, yet the length of time since their departure, and their destination to the islands, and the capture of his child on the English borders, completely baffled all suspicion respecting them.

CHAPTER V.

RANDOLPH and his companions having reached the shores of Barra, the party took the way to the fortress, Randolph carrying the young Roskelyn.

In their passage from the shore they met a piper, whom Randolph ordered to precede them, playing one of his most lively airs.

St Clair and his companions were in the hall, when the mingled sounds of the pipe, a loud exclamation of triumph, and the horn at the gate, struck his ear. "By Heaven!" cried he, starting up, "'tis Randolph; but why such sounds of satisfaction is beyond my comprehension."

As he spoke, he rushed forward, but was met at the entrance by Randolph, who exclaimed—"Triumph, St Clair! I bring thee a noble prisoner, a mine of wealth; and, what is still more precious, I have wrung the hearts of all thine enemies. Nay, man, never gape with wonder—hold out thine arms, and receive my charge—'tis a noble gift—the heir of the house of Roskelyn, the young Montrose."

St Clair appeared transfixed with astonishment, his eyes riveted on the child, but drew back his hands as though they had recoiled from a serpent. "Impossible!" at length cried he; "but were it so, what is the child of John of Roskelyn to me?"

"What a question!" answered Randolph; "the son of John of Roskelyn is to thee wealth, liberty, rank, and fortune restored."

"I know not how," replied St Clair; "but prithee, Randolph, explain this jest, for jest it must be."

"'Tis the most true one, then," answered Randolph, "thou didst ever hear. In few words, Roskelyn behaved like a villain, and fortune threw revenge in my way in the person of this boy, whom his parents will be glad to regain at the expense of all they have purloined from thee."

"Poor child!" exclaimed St Clair, emphatically, "art thou, too, doomed to suffer for the crimes of thy parents?"

"Suffer!" repeated Randolph; "no sufferings are attached to the part he has to act, and as to the family of Roskelyn, their punishment is deserved."

"It is," answered St Clair! "but, Randolph, I will never owe the recovery of my rights to this child."

Randolph looked displeased. "Thus it is," said he, "that over-officious friendship is ever repaid."

"Dear Randolph," exclaimed St Clair, "I acknowledge your friendship, but for pity's sake, explain this business."

Randolph then related his expedition, and concluded by saying, that thinking it prudent to sink the name of Montrose of Roskelyn, "On our arrival in Ireland I gave the boy in lieu that of Randolph Monteith; and, in faith, I think you may be proud of your son."

Whatever St Clair's thoughts were, he suppressed them, only saying, "I should be sorry if, by this business, he should hereafter be disowned by his family, and declared an impostor."

"That I defy them to do," replied Randolph; "nature herself has stamped his birth-right beyond all power of dispute." So saying, he stripped young Montrose's right arm, which was wine-marked from the wrist to the elbow.

"A providential mark," said St Clair, "and as you say, cannot fail to identify him at any future period. As for taking ransom, I decline it. But more of this subject hereafter: come on—our cellar shall testify that we rejoice at your return; even Roskelyn shall be forgotten: this night we give to joy. To-morrow we will talk of business." So saying, they seated themselves at table, and gave the evening to conviviality until they retired to rest.

Even the wine had not power to banish from the mi[illegible] what had passed. In the lonely quiet of his chamber every [illegible] occurrence returned with redoubled violence; he felt, as he had be[illegible] truly said, the full force of Randolph's friendship, which had made him stoop to a deed he deemed dishonourable, but which Randolph thought no more of than taking a captive in battle.

How to act in respect to the child he knew not—to return him was impossible, without involving Randolph in disgrace, and himself in a quarrel with one who had so truly exerted his friendship for him, and indeed with all his companions: for they appeared to consider such a prisoner as Montrose of the utmost consequence, as at any time he would enable either themselves or St Clair to make their own terms.

St Clair, however, felt the most lively vexation on being necessitated to pass for his father; but Randolph having made such declaration to his nurse, a change might excite suspicion.

In a short time the young Randolph, as he was called, became the favourite of the whole party, except St Clair, who always viewed him with a mixture of concern, and if not with dislike, a sentiment nearly resembling it. Such, however, is the power of infancy and innocence over a heart naturally kind, that he frequently forgot his disgust, to answer his infantine caresses; but the tender name of father, which the young Randolph began to articulate plainly, ever acted like an electric shock, and never failed to awaken all the discordant passions of his soul.

Young Roskelyn had been about two months at Barra, when one of the fishing vessels brought a stranger, who inquired for St Clair; and being admitted into the fortress, Monteith was astonished to see a young lad whose appearance bespoke him to be far superior to their general visitors.

He was formed with the slightest, but most graceful symmetry; and his face exhibited a model of natural beauty, at once bespeaking sweetness and dignity. On his entrance, bowing his head,—"My business," said he, "is with the chief, St Clair Monteith,—I pray you direct me to him."

"I am so called," replied Monteith; "and pleasant, I ween, must the business be that is borne by such a messenger."

"I trust so; five weeks since I left the court of Scotland, and before my departure, was entrusted with a small casket to deliver here, if occasion suited." So saying, he delivered a small box, carefully sealed, into the hands of St Clair, who having opened the casket, to his great astonishment, saw a gold chain that had belonged to his uncle Monteith, with various other jewels, under these a purse containing sixty marks, and at the bottom of the casket a letter to this import:—

"The enclosed jewels and money, the property of St Clair Monteith, are remitted to him by a friend. For the present he is requested to bear his situation with patience, as any attempt to leave the island would end in his destruction, his enemies only wanting a pretence to take a life which keeps them in perpetual dread of their own. By the messenger let him remit some trifling memorial that the casket has been received."

"Strange!" exclaimed St Clair;—"that the jewels were my uncle's, and afterwards mine, is most true; but how these should escape the general wreck, is beyond comprehension; the money, too. Indeed, my

u must tell me who this unknown friend is, that, if ever
In their selves. I may thank him."

"My orders went no farther than to deliver the packet," answered the youth.

"John of Roskelyn, nor the agent Carnegie, have nothing to do with this business, I ween?"

"Nothing, on mine honour."

"Yet my whole property is in their hands."

"It is; but it is impossible for them to sell or alienate it."

"Undoubtedly not; but then it becomes the property of another, and I have no right—"

"You have a just right to what I have brought, and most probably will hear again from the same quarter; but your friend must choose another messenger, for I love not to be too closely questioned."

"The gift, for I consider it no other, would lose half its value, by any other hand—thy spirit charms me. But say, I pray thee, as thou camest from the court, how tends all there?"

"Not pleasantly; the king is at variance with many of his nobles, who lament the loss of the old regent. The Earl of Roskelyn, three months since, lost his son near the English borders, and has since obtained no tidings of him."

"A severe grief," said St Clair.

"Yes, to the earl and dowager: but the Lady Roskelyn bears it bravely."

"'Tis well! yet a mother's feelings are said to be the most acute."

"True; but if I mistake not, the Lady Roskelyn was never famed for the softer qualities of her sex."

"Justly observed; I find thou knowest her, her face and heart are at variance; the first is fair and beautiful—the second, hard, false, and ungrateful."

"You speak feelingly, chief; the world says she treated you ungratefully."

"Thou art a shrewd youth. What age art thou?"

"Nineteen."

"Thou appearest not near so much. I fear to offend by questions, but hast thou preferment near the court?"

"No—I love it not; even this island is more pleasant to me than the court of James."

"That is strange; but thou wilt hereafter think otherwise; a few years over, and the down of manhood on thy chin, the courtly dames will emulate each other for thy favour."

"And when they have gained it, throw me away from them for the first fool who has more wealth or rank than myself. Think you not so, chief?"

"Faith! like enough: but notwithstanding thy youth, thou appearest to be forewarned, and must therefore act with caution."

"I mean it: the woman on whom I bestow my heart shall give proofs, not only that she prefers me to all others, but if occasion so wills it, shall be content to share poverty, sorrow, unmerited disgrace with me; she shall likewise yield up without a sigh the vanities of the world, for the privilege of reigning sole empress over my heart."

"Thou art a romantic lad, and thinkest like nineteen; but when thou

meetest this phœnix, I pray thee give her this chain, and tell her that St Clair honours her above all women."

"Not so: have you forgotten that she is to be superior to a love of trinkets? That gold chain, in the exhausted state of your finances, may be more usefully employed. I will take only a ring, or some article of small value, to convey to your friend, that he may know that I have executed his commands."

"Thou shalt; but for thyself, I insist that thou takest a memorial of me: were I more fortunate, I would wish thy further acquaintance: as it is, I need no more companions in sorrow: but should ill-fortune ever assail thee as to render so poor a friend necessary, I prithee note in thy memory St Clair."

"I will," answered the youth, kissing his hand. "Time and chance happeneth to all: and fear not, the fortune of Monteith will again change. That he has friends to whom his happiness is truly dear, rest assured, and who will lose no opportunity to forward his interest."

"Why not gratify my curiosity by naming those friends!" said St Clair: at least tell me thy name."

"Ambrose—parents I have none, but a tyrannic guardian embitters my days."

"Poor youth: but thou hast a friend, for him thou namest mine is doubtless thine, by the trust reposed in thee."

"He is: but alas: his means are limited as my own; could he act according to his wishes, not only wealth and rank would be St Clair's, but every worldly blessing."

"I thank thee for him; but thy fascinating discourse hath made me regardless of the rights of hospitality; I will present thee to my friends, and thou must gratify us by tarrying a short time with us to repose thyself."

"It is impossible; I must away to-morrow."

"I grieve at it; take this ring, I pray, for a token, to my unknown friend, and tell him that St Clair's life gains value from his affection. For thyself, I insist thou wearest this chain—nay, I will not be refused," added he, throwing it round his neck. "In faith, thy complexion might vie with the snow of our mountains, for it shames that of the fairest maiden I ever saw."

"Nay, chief," replied the youth, blushing, "reproach me not for what I cannot help; if I cannot otherwise gain a more manly appearance, I will try the wintry snows of Barra, and the summer sun."

"And welcome shalt thou be; but come—our board awaits; thou wilt neither find courtly provision nor a courtly welcome, only plain food, and rude, honest hearts, more ready to act than to promise."

So saying, St Clair led the way to the hall, where he introduced the youthful Ambrose to his companions, who received him with the kindness and cordiality his errand demanded.

CHAPTER VI.

St Clair placed his guest by his side at his social board, and the rest vied with each other in attention to the stranger, who ate and spoke little. The meat being withdrawn, in vain they urged him to take wine; he said it made him sick and feverish.

The chevalier sat next him, and appeared to view him with attention that evidently gave him pain; and at length addressing him, he said—"In faith, sweet youth, I have seen some of the fairest hands in the French, the English, and the Scottish courts, but thine exceeds them all."

"I love not compliments," replied the youth, "and should least have expected to find them at Barra."

"Truth ought to be met with everywhere," replied De Bourg.

"I must endeavour then to bronze my complexion, if it will save me from unpleasant remarks."

"The chevalier is a Frenchman," said St Clair; "and thou doubtless hast heard, Ambrose, they inherit from nature the gift of flattery; besides, 'tis so long since he possessed the virtue of modesty, that he hath forgotten it, and can make no allowance for thine."

"I will take lessons from thee, thou woman-hater; but the hour will come when I shall see thee as docile to the sex as I myself am inclined to be."

"I know not when; my heart is whole now, and I will take care to preserve it so."

Ross, Hamilton, and the rest, then joining in the conversation, on various topics, they sat till the night was far advanced, when St Clair showed his guest to an apartment in the fortress, and, taking his hand, wished him a good rest.

At an early hour, St Clair rose, the occurrences of the former day having kept him waking.

Strolling to the sea-shore, he beheld, to his great astonishment, the little fishing vessel that had brought the stranger, quitting the coast, and already at some distance from the land. To his further amazement he discovered on the deck the youthful Ambrose, who waved his white hand, and then, as if to testify his friendship, laid it on his breast. St Clair involuntarily raised his as if to pray his return, but in vain: the vessel pursued her way, though, while it remained in sight, the strained eyes of St Clair could discover the graceful form of the youth in the same posture.

Vexed and lost in a labyrinth of conjecture, he returned to the fortress, and informed his friends of the strange departure of Ambrose. Their opinions were various; some regarded him as a spy sent by the house of Roskelyn. Others deemed his errand merely as he himself had given out, from a concealed friend, in which opinion St Clair joined.

"My opinion differs from you all," said the chevalier, "you think like men and warriors: I consider the subject as a Frenchman, and an admirer of beauty, and I am convinced that our visitor is either a woman, or an angel in disguise."

"Ridiculous!" cried St Clair, "for what purpose should a woman, and such a woman, come to the Isle of Barra?"

"In troth to comfort thee," replied the chevalier. "Oh! would to fortune she had come on such an errand to me; hadst thou possessed aught but a heart of stone, thou must have discovered the secret."

Many of the party espoused this opinion, and attributed the sudden departure to a fear of discovery, which the ardent gaze of the chevalier might have rendered probable.

St Clair treated the whole with ridicule, though the suspicions of De

Bourg were not without their effect, and he was no sooner alone, than he walked to the chamber where the stranger had reposed.

Here fresh astonishment awaited him, for on the table lay the golden chain, and by it the tablets of Ambrose, in which were written :—

"Oppressed by your generosity, which in the present state of your affairs, is mistimed, I return your gift, not for want of value for the donor, but because you may appropriate it in a manner more consonant to my wishes. In the meantime, be assured that your friends will be anxious for your welfare, among them none more so than

AMBROSE."

As no more was heard of the stranger, and as his mysterious visit was followed by no particular consequence, he became daily less thought of in the fortress. The active mind, however, of St Clair was neither insensible nor forgetful of the kindness he had received from his unknown friend, nor of the injuries he had received from the house of Roskelyn; and, ardently as he wished to repay the first, no less ardently did he long to revenge the latter.

An epidemic that had for some months ravaged the neighbouring isles, at this time reached Barra, and all the kindness of the inhabitants of the fortress was called forth to assist the distressed sufferers.

Though fearless of danger, the infection at length reached them, and the Tower of M'Leod, in its turn, became a receptacle of sick warriors. Amongst the first who fell a sacrifice was the friendly Randolph.

Even James M'Gregor himself, though much distressed at his brother's death, did not appear to feel it so severely as did St Clair. The latter watched his friend day and night with unwearied assiduity, and saw the deadly ravages of disease with an anguish he could not entirely conceal from the sufferer.

"St Clair," said Randolph, some hours before his decease, "my strength fails me, but my heart is still the same; one of its warmest wishes is, that thou mayest be avenged of the house of Roskelyn; promise me, therefore, that thou wilt not deprive thyself of the means which fortune made me the instrument of putting into thy hands. When occasion serves, thou canst bring forward the boy, or if a length of time should first elapse, thou wilt have the satisfaction, if he inherit not too much of his father and mother, of making him a brave fellow, and an honest man. As to the arrangement of my property, that I have settled with my brother, and entirely to his liking; and I only require a promise from thee to act according to my wishes, after which I shall have nothing to do but to resign myself to the fate which awaits me. Give me thy hand, and promise."

St Clair swore to act according to the desire of Randolph, who, after shaking hands with all the residents at the fortress, composed himself for some hours, when, turning suddenly and seeing St Clair pensively sitting by his side, he said,—"Monteith, thou art as weak as a woman; had I fallen in the field thou wouldst not have been thus sad,—away with grief; death is the common lot of all, and to a mind resolved, less painful than thou thinkest. Farewell!"

Such were the last words of Randolph, his companions standing round his couch in deep dejection. "Art thou indeed gone?" said St Clair; "would that my fortune was for ever Roskelyn's sooner than I should have seen this day!"

CHAPTER VII.

The young heir of Roskelyn, or Randolph, as he was called, now two years old, was strong, hardy, and playful as the mountain kid. Too young to remember the castle of his father, the sum of all the greatness he desired was confined to Barra. His young heart attached to Randolph, who warmly returned his affection, he had been accustomed to run constantly after him, and not only plainly articulate his name, but could also express his own wants and wishes. His custom was at early morn, to escape, if possible, from his nurse, and hasten to Randolph's chamber, when, if the door was closed, he beat until it was opened to him, or if unbarred, he climbed upon the couch, and awakened the rough warrior with his caresses. Insensible of the loss of his friend, the morning succeeding his death he followed his usual custom. The chamber was unbarred, and on the couch lay the lifeless body of Randolph. He climbed up, and with infantine fondness endeavoured to awaken him by his playful caresses, till, at length, weary with the unavailing effort, he laid his head upon his bosom, and fell asleep. In this situation he was found by St Clair, who, entering the chamber of his friend, was astonished to find him so accompanied.

A sentiment of affection which he had never before felt for the infant rose in his bosom, and, gently waking him, he asked what he did there.

"Warm Randolph," replied he, shuddering with the cold that had communicated itself to his own body; "he won't speak."

"Boy," said St Clair, scarcely restraining a starting tear, "whence inheritest thou that sentiment of gratitude?"

"Wake Randolph," continued the child. gazing at him; "he won't love me now."

"For his sake I could almost love thee," said St Clair; and, taking him in his arms, he hastened away to his nurse, whom he chid for her neglect, and ordered her at the same time to wash him, to prevent, if possible, the infection.

From this day the chief and young Randolph were more warmly attached to each other.

The attachment of the islanders to the chief and his friends was strongly exemplified at the funeral of Randolph. Not only the inhabitants of Barra attended, but also several hundreds from the adjacent isles. A priest also attended from Kismul.

The funeral procession was headed by pipers playing martial tunes, after which was borne the armour of Randolph, with his spear and sword reversed; then walked the priest; next came the body, borne by men who had served in battle; after them followed the inhabitants of the fortress; and lastly, the numerous visitors that had assembled on the occasion. The body deposited, the earth sprinkled with sacred water, and the holy rites ended, they all returned to the fortress, where a plentiful entertainment was provided. At early dawn they erected a monument of such stones as the island afforded, placing at the top a rude cross, formed of the same materials. Pleased with their friendship and attachment, St Clair and his companions detained them two days, after which every one took his way to his respective home.

The first effusions of grief over, M'Gregor, one day addressing the

party, said—"One duty yet remains unperformed to our beloved Randolph. With his tremulous hand he wrote a testament, which myself and Hamilton signed."

So saying, he unfolded a parchment, and read as follows:—

"Whereas I, Randolph M'Gregor, being called by the will of God to lay down myself on a sick-bed, unfitting a warrior, but best as he decrees it, I will that my worldly property be disposed as follows:—My brothers, Alexander and James, being well provided with the gifts of fortune, the first from his father, the second by his uncle, I give the whole of my estates, bequeathed me by my patron, Randolph Bruce, unto St Clair Monteith, for his natural life; and at his death, to his son, my namesake, the young Randolph—so that if ever I have injured that child, I may make whatever restitution is in my power. My armour I bequeath to my brother, Alexander, my spear and spurs to James, and my sword and shield to St Clair; praying them to bear my death as becomes men and soldiers who trust to live again—in which I hope I die.

RANDOLPH M'GREGOR."

St Clair heard the will in silence, and appeared lost in thought.

"St Clair," said Ross, "rise from this grief that clouds thy future prospect. Men, thou knowest, are mortal, and born to die."

"Men are indeed mortal, and while they are so, they must feel, replied St Clair. I revere the memory of Randolph, and his intention in my favour, but will never profit by it."

"And so be forsworn," answered M'Gregor. "Randolph injured not his family by the bequest, as what he inherited was from Randolph Bruce, who answered for him at the font; thou must therefore keep thy promise to him, or forfeit thy honour."

For some time a heavy gloom hung over the inhabitants of the fortress. It at length, however, began to subside, but least so in St Clair, whose efforts to appear cheerful were evidently forced.

Some fishermen, who occasionally traded to the mainland of Scotland, at this time brought intelligence that a grand tournament was to be held at Perth, in honour of the queen, at which the flower of the Scottish nation, as well as foreigners, were expected to be assembled. St Clair declared that nothing should prevent him going; and to calm the apprehensions of his companions, he promised to go disguised, and to enter into no quarrel that might endanger his safety.

Though no one approved of the plan, yet the heavy apprehension that hung over him inclined them to consent, in hopes that it might tend to dissipate it, provided he would select some of his friends to accompany him. This, however, he warmly declined; but at last it was agreed that Ross and De Bourg should be of the party, and three others of their companions that were unrestrained by law. The business arranged, they sailed to the isle of Mull, where St Clair, Ross, and De Bourg took the habits of knights, and their companions those of their squires; and crossing to the mainland, passed themselves for Danes who were curious to see the tournament.

Purchasing chargers, they continued their way, and arrived at Perth one day before the opening of the entertainment.

The morning of the tournament was ushered in by music and every demonstration of joy that could be devised, and at the hour of ten, the whole court and all the knights assembled on an extensive plain near the

city, to begin the sport. The queen and the ladies sat in front, on raised seats, according to their rank and dignity. On one side was placed the king, his courtiers, and attendants, and the umpires; on the other, the knights and visitors who came to view the tilting, in front of whom were the first candidates for fame and honour.

St Clair and his friends gazed fearlessly around. Their faces concealed by their visors, they without restraint remarked and recognised several, yet remained themselves unknown. At some distance from the queen sat the Dowager of Roskelyn, and her daughter-in-law, the young countess.

The Earl of Roskelyn, as he was not among the courtiers or umpires, St Clair concluded was among the champions, and curiously examined each to discover him.

The sport at length commenced, and several knights tried their skill and fortune with various success, until at length a young Scottish knight gallantly accoutred in black embossed armour, advanced, and by the herald proclaimed Queen Jane, wife of King James I. of Scotland, the fairest of women, defying all to combat who averred to the contrary.

An English knight accepted the challenge, asserting the superiority of the Countess of Salisbury, and the combat began. Equal prowess and dexterity for a time kept the spectators in suspense, but the English knight at length gave way, and the Scot was declared victor. A French knight then took the vanquished's place, but was equally unsuccessful as his predecessor.

Elated with his triumph, the young knight, taking the arms of the vanquished, and kneeling, laid them at the queen's feet.

"Rise, Sir Knight of Lorn," said she, "I thank you. Your gallantry must please all women, and well I know there is one who can repay the obligations I owe you. Sir James Stuart may aspire to the highest and fairest of the Scottish maids."

The queen, then turning to her attendants, said, "Call forward the Dowager Countess of Roskelyn, and pray her to bring in her hand her fair charge, the heiress of Kintail. I would a short conference with them."

The Dowager of Roskelyn immediately advanced with the young maid, whose beauty, added to the queen's request, attracted all eyes but those of St Clair, who hastily withdrew his from an object so obnoxious as the countess.

A profound silence reigned throughout the assembly. The dowager and the young maid knelt at the queen's feet, who condescendingly commanded them to rise, and prepared to address them.

"Monteith," exclaimed De Bourg, in a low voice, "art thou blind? Do we not in the heiress of Kintail recognise thy friend Ambrose?"

St Clair started. "It is impossible," answered he, forgetting the disgust occasioned by the sight of the countess, and gazing ardently on the scene before him. "'Tis like—yet it cannot be. Peace, De Bourg—attend to her voice: it she speaks, I cannot be deceived."

"To the Dowager of Roskelyn," said the queen, "the court owes many thanks, for introducing to it one of the fairest ornaments of the country, the heiress of Kintail. To keep her near us is one of our warmest wishes, and if she would accept a husband from the hands of the Queen of Scotland, I should be happy to present her my knight, Sir James Stuart."

The young heiress for some moments appeared confused, but by the time the queen ended, seemed to collect herself, and raising her downcast eyes, fixed them with dignified composure, first on the queen, and then on the knight of Lorn. "Gracious lady," said she, addressing the queen, "to Sir James Stuart I owe my thanks for his first address, as his distinguishing me from the other women was a compliment I feel the weight of, but I gave him then my answer, and his persecution since becomes neither a noble gentleman nor a brave and courteous knight. Pardon me, my liege, I am rude, being mountain-born and bred, and become not the manners of the court, and cannot, nay, will not give my hand without my heart; and my heart will never beat in unison with that of the knight of Lorn."

"Amazement!" exclaimed Monteith to De Bourg. "By my soul, 'tis the same!—a woman, and what a woman! an angel in mind and person."

"Ambrosine," said the Dowager of Roskelyn, "know you in whose presence you stand, that you speak thus boldly, and with unthankfulness dash back the happiness offered by the gracious queen?"

"If, indeed," resumed the queen, "your heart was engaged, there might be a subject of excuse, but the Lady Roskelyn assures me to the contrary."

"The Lady Roskelyn," replied Ambrosine, "has yet, my liege, to learn to read the human heart."

"Bold, perverse girl," said the dowager, "would you infer to her grace that you have engaged your affections? If you have done so to one worthy of you, declare it—if to some low-born wretch you are beneath my care."

"When, lady, did you ever find me regardless of either my rank in life or the duties annexed to it? Never will Ambrosine of Kintail give her heart to one of baser blood than that which flows in her own veins."

"Enough," said the king, "you vex the maid; she is fair enough to demand a ten years' siege, and then, by my faith, the man would be well repaid who won her."

"We will then," replied the queen, "grant her a truce; on maturer thoughts she will, I trust, yield to our wishes."

"To none, so please your grace, in which the Knight of Lorn hath a share." So saying, Ambrosine followed the Lady Roskelyn to her seat, and the jousting commenced, lasting till the day was far advanced, after which, the king, queen, and court retired to a grand entertainment provided on the occasion.

St Clair and his companions also retired.

CHAPTER VIII.

At an early hour the outlaws hastened to the field of sports. The company was assembled, and the Knight of Lorn again proclaimed the charms of his sovereign unrivalled. Twice the trumpet sounded, and no one entered the lists against him; at the third charge St Clair stepped forward.

"Sir knight," said he, affecting a foreign accent, "my gage against yours; I acknowledge not the charms of any of our Danish virgins—no, nor even those of the heiress of Kintail, but of Ambrosine, the Highland

maid, with an angel's form and a hero's spirit; therefore back to your seat, and if I unhorse you not in three turns, the disgrace be mine."

"Sooner said than done," replied Sir James, "though you challenge me unfairly, using the name of her I love, but have with you, Sir Knight."

So saying, they spurred their coursers, and attacked each other with a fury increased by pride and emulation, but the skill of the Knight of Lorn was not to be put in competition with the strength, activity, and knowledge of Monteith, who true to his word, in the third turn unhorsed his adversary.

"Did not I tell you," said Monteith ironically, but still maintaining his foreign accent, "that all must yield to the Highland maid? Are ye for another encounter, or have ye enough?"

"Not so," replied Sir James, "to my last breath I will maintain the charms of the Scottish queen unrivalled."

So saying, he drew his sword, but only to experience fresh disgrace, for in spite of his utmost efforts, he was disarmed with such violence that the king commanded him not to hazard a third encounter.

No cries of triumph, nor any sound of satisfaction marked Monteith's victory, for the Scottish nobles, discomfited at the disgrace of the queen's knight by a stranger, swore to avenge him, while Monteith, alone in the ring, his visor still down, thus addressed them:—

"Nobles and knights, a stranger among ye, I have no wish to carry off unearned the palm of victory. I am not yet breathed; Ambrosine still hangs upon my sword; let me not earn honour so easily."

"We mean it not," said the Knight of Traquair, riding forward. "We all allow the beauty of the fair heiress, but the Queen of Scotland yields to none."

"That, time will show," replied Monteith. "Come on, the charms of Ambrosine, though known but yesterday, might sinew a weaker arm than mine."

A giant strength appeared to animate the graceful but manly body of Monteith, for in a few minutes he gave his opponent such a severe fall, that he declined all further contest; nor were three that afterwards replaced him more fortunate.

"Now have with thee, though thou wert the devil," cried a knight, riding forward, whom Monteith knew instantly for the Lord Roskelyn. "Hitherto thou hast borne it bravely—the Queen of Scotland nerves my arm, as thou sayest of Ambrosine; therefore beware, thou foreign boaster."

The heart of St Clair beat high, but, preserving his feigned accent and manner, he said—

"Alas, poor queen! I would she had a better champion."

Roskelyn was strongly formed and active, but he was not equal to Monteith, and though for some time he appeared to support the conflict with great skill, he at length shared the fate of those that preceded him.

"If it be thus in jest," said Clair, "we should be unequal opponents in a more serious contest."

No other champion presenting for the queen, the sports were adjourned until the morrow; Monteith first taking the weapons of the vanquished, and laying them at the feet of Ambrosine.

"Sir Knight," said she, "I can scarcely return you thanks for a compliment that will make me many foes. You are apparently strong,

skilful, and experienced in warlike encounters, and will doubtless find divers occasions to distinguish yourself against your enemies; but even in that case, I pray ye, remember mercy as the most glorious quality in a conqueror, and Ambrosine will always recollect with gratitude the undeserved honour you have paid her."

"Lady," answered Monteith, still in a feigned accent, "while I remember Ambrosine, I must remember mercy—and who that has once seen so fair a maid, can forget her."

"You rate me above my deserts," answered she, blushing; "but I thank you. Prosperous gales waft ye safe to the Danish shore, where some fair maid, I trust, will pay the debt of Ambrosine."

"I seek no return, lady—I dare not love; but if ever Ambrosine should need a knight, remember she hath one who is ready to sacrifice his life in her service." So saying, St Clair remounted his courser, and with his friends, left the field of sports.

On the ensuing morning, Monteith, Ross, and De Bourg, were the first that entered the lists, proclaiming by the herald the merit and beauty of Ambrosine, declaring themselves her knights, and defying all who refused to acknowledge her claim; none, however, were found to oppose them, for the defeats of the second day had damped all valour, and made the whole assembly resolve not to encounter the strange knight, or his companions, who, they doubted not, were as dangerous as himself.

The sports of that day, as all declined encountering the strange knights, were few, so that all returned at an early hour to the feasting provided, and which was to close the entertainment.

St Clair and his companions immediately left Perth, and took the way to Edinburgh, in order to execute a plan which they had formed.

In the environs of Edinburgh dwelt Carnegie, on a small estate, which had been part of the patrimony of St Clair.

Thither the outlaws directed their steps, and being admitted by the domestics, as knights who were returning from the tournament, forced the agent to give up the arrears due of the estate of St Clair.

St Clair then wrote an acquittal, and striking Carnegie on the back with the flat of his sword, he said—"Remember this lesson, and profit by it. Farewell." With these words they left the dwelling without opposition, and joining their friends, travelled during the night with the utmost speed.

Carnegie was too much alarmed and panic-stricken to leave his dwelling until the ensuing morning, when, somewhat re-assured by finding all quiet, he ventured to mount his horse, and, attended by his four domestics, hastened to the castle of Roskelyn.

CHAPTER IX.

On reaching Roskelyn, Carnegie found that the lord of the domain had arrived late the evening before, and being admitted into the hall, found him seated with the countess, his wife, the dowager, his mother, and the heiress of Kintail.

Carnegie's looks were indicative that all was not well, and Lord Roskelyn addressing him, immediately asked the cause. To his great astonishment, he learned what had passed with the outlaws, and from

the description, had no doubt but the Danish strangers were the same. The disgrace of his defeat in the jousting, the contemptuous manner of his opponent, his boldness in demanding his own, all conspired to awaken his fears, and to wound the pride of Roskelyn, who, with the most deadly imprecations, vowed revenge.

The dowager said little, but appeared confused and grieved, while the young countess, with a glance of contempt at her lord, only wished that Heaven had made her a man, in which case she would neither have suffered personal disgrace, nor have been outwitted by St Clair Monteith.

Such was the effect that Carnegie's account had upon three of the party, while on the fourth, Ambrosine, it had a contrary effect, exciting only her mirth, and causing her to laugh so heartily as to draw upon her the rebukes of the whole family.

"Out upon you, rude girl!" said the dowager. "You said truly that you were mountain-born and bred; but why an affair, so replete with vexation to us, should be a cause of mirth to you, I cannot comprehend."

"I pray you pardon me," replied Ambrosine. "Women, you know, are fond of brave men, and that St Clair should succeed, delights me."

"Delights you!" repeated the dowager. "This is surely too much to avow in the presence of the injured party."

"Heaven forefend that I should increase the vexation of any person that was injured!" answered Ambrosine. "Lord Roskelyn comes not under that description."

"Wonder not at Ambrosine!" said the countess spitefully. "Have you forgotten the attention the villain paid her at the tournament? To a young maid, unaccustomed to the attentions of men, carrying away the claim of beauty was so flattering a compliment, that I should not be surprised to see her throw herself into the arms of her champion."

"And should they open to receive me," answered Ambrosine," I should be an object of universal envy. The proud dames of the fertile south, stretched on silken beds by their listless lords, would envy the wife of Monteith, amidst the barren rocks of Barra, defended by the arms of a hero."

"Think you so?" replied the countess scornfully. "How comes it, then, that he hath not wedded? The world says that he hath already loved."

"I have heard so, but I believe it not. Boys and girls form strange fancies, and call it love."

"St Clair's passion was said not to be of that light nature," replied the countess, with visible pique.

"At least, then," answered Ambrosine, "he bears disappointment well. On a hero like Monteith, a slight passion, or a love unjustly treated, would make no impression beyond the passing hour; but one deserving his heart and worthily returned, would take a root never to be effaced but with life itself."

"On my word," said the dowager, "had you ever seen Monteith before the tournament, when I am convinced you saw not his face, I should say you were preposterous enough to love him."

"I shall never love a man for his face. I could as well love a statue or a picture."

"I will away to Edinburgh," said Lord Roskelyn. "The king is returned thither. He will not suffer his commands to be broken with impunity."

So saying, he called for his retinue, and, taking horse, lost no time in hastening to the city.

He found the king assembled in council with his nobles, and immediately preferred his complaint, which was heard with a mixture of surprise and anger; the first at the boldness of the outlaws, the second at the little heed they paid to the sentence passed against them.

The hopelessness of reaching the offenders, however, was so apparent, that nothing was even attempted.

In the meantime, safe from danger, and laughing at what had passed, Monteith, Ross, De Bourg, and their companions, reached the coast, and speedily sailed to Barra, where they were warmly received by their friends, who had not been free from alarm during their absence. What also gave the whole party pleasure, was the revived spirits of St Clair, who appeared to have thrown off the heavy gloom that hung over him before his departure. The little Randolph hung about his neck, and by a thousand kisses welcomed his return, while St Clair pressed him in his arms, saying:—

"Boy, either thy face and manners partake of the deepest hypocrisy, or thou wilt neither resemble father nor mother."

About a month after their return, St Clair visited the isle of Skye, accompanied by De Bourg and M'Gregor. After passing some time there, they crossed the narrow frith to Kintail, where, in the ordinary guise of travellers, they visited the castle of the heiress. Here they learned that their fair mistress was almost idolized among her vassals, and that by the will of her mother, she was left, for the years of her minority, in the charge of the Dowager of Roskelyn, with whom they expected her soon to visit her paternal dwelling.

"Is it long since you saw your mistress?" said St Clair, carelessly addressing the domestic.

"Not more than six months," replied he; "but her stay was short—Lady Roskelyn was impatient to return to the south, and even left the lady Ambrosine for the last month; but she joined her at Inverness."

"The identical time," said St Clair, in a low voice, to De Bourg; then addressing the man, he added—"you expect her speedily to return—said you not so?"

"Daily."

Having satisfied their curiosity, they retired; resolving again to visit Kintail before their return to Barra, but in the meantime to tarry in the isle of Skye.

By passengers that were continually crossing the frith, they, in about ten days, learned that the heiress of Kintail was arrived at her castle, and that, by the orders of Lady Roskelyn, great preparations were making to entertain a gallant company, which entertainment, some whispered, would terminate in the marriage of the heiress.

"If her heart is willing," said St Clair, "happy may she be! but, by my soul! if otherwise, not Lady Roskelyn, nor all her friends to back her, shall force the sweet maid."

De Bourg burst into a fit of laughter.

"Give me tigers, fiends, serpents, devils—any thing but women!" exclaimed he. "Oh, how I like to see a fellow brought to his senses."

"To lose them rather," replied Monteith. "Laugh, De Bourg—I give thee free licence—thou art welcome—I deserve it all; but, say, canst

thou allow nothing for repentance? nay, to gratify thee at once, man, were I master of my fortune, I would lay it at the feet of Ambrosine, but, as it is, I decline all but friendship."

"Commend me to the friendship of a fellow of twenty-seven, like thee, and a girl of nineteen, like Ambrosine," cried De Bourg. "By Heaven! if thou carriest not off this heiress, I will proclaim thee a poltroon."

"Then thou undoubtedly wilt do so," replied Monteith; "could I give her happiness, my heart and hand would be ready; but to overwhelm her with my disgrace and poverty, is both against my honour and inclination."

CHAPTER X.

The information which the outlaws had received of the heiress being arrived at her castle of Kintail was true, and many visitors of the highest rank were expected to join them in a few days.

Some evenings after their arrival, one of the vassals entering the hall where the dowager and Ambrosine were seated at supper, informed them that three minstrels requested to be admitted.

"I pray you give them meat," said Ambrosine; "and, with Lady Roskelyn's leave, admit them. My heart is heavy, and music may banish thought."

"And why should your heart be heavy?" said the dowager. "Youth, wealth, and beauty, are yours, and one of the first knights in Scotland is willing to devote a life to you."

"If he is inclined to continue his folly, I cannot hinder; but were it only for the persecution, I should hate him."

At that moment the lackey entered with the minstrels; two walked with difficulty, and the third wore an enormous patch, to conceal the loss of an eye. They were, however, clean and respectably clad, and their grey hairs and beards demanded respect and compassion.

The Dowager of Roskelyn was too haughty to exchange words with creatures she regarded so far beneath her; but Ambrosine's heart, at once unassuming and gentle, struck with their appearance—"Poor fellows! give them," said she to the lackey, "each a bumper of wine—it will comfort their age and renovate their spirits."

The lackey did as he was commanded, and the musicians beginning to play, the blind minstrel sung a number of stirring ballads, all of which his companions accompanied with their instruments, until at length he paused, and asked what he should sing next.

"Lady Roskelyn will choose," said Ambrosine; "you have a goodly collection, and shall stay a while at the castle."

"Nay," replied the dowager. "I care not what—name some."

"Will you lady," said the minstrel, "Hardicanute, the Lady Barberry, the Danish defeat, or—"

"These are old," said the dowager, interrupting him; "know you nothing new? none of the court songs?"

"None, lady,—they suit not my voice; but we have an Erse song that pleaseth much; it is called the banished man and the angel—shall I sing that?"

"If you will—but I hate the language, and do not comprehend it altogether; therefore give us first the argument."

"Willingly, lady. In the reign of one of our Scottish kings (I care not which), some men, unjustly treated, were banished to an island on the western coast, and left a prey to the most poignant vexation. The song consists of an account of their being visited by an angel, who not only came to relieve their wants, but left an impression of gratitude on their hearts never to be erased."

"Ambrosine started at the beginning of the argument, but at the conclusion interrupted the minstrel, and with her cheeks dyed with blushes, said—"I pray you sing not that—I know it well—there is something in it respecting a damsel who forgot the decorum of her sex —I like it not."

"You mistake, lady; in the conduct of the maid there was nothing at which the chastity of a sainted virgin need blush; and——"

"Out upon the filthy fellow!" interrupted the dowager; "would he shock our ears with his unchaste ditties?"

"Not so; the purest maid of Scotland was not more praise-worthy than the damsel—but the young lady mistakes the song for some other."

"No, not so," replied Ambrosine; "to prove that I know it, did not the banished man want to bribe the angel, and to make her tipsy?"

"No, on my life, lady!" replied the minstrel, scarce refraining from laughter; "they knew her not, at the time; but, once discovered, they worshipped her."

"Oh! I can tell you every word," answered Ambrosine. "Say what you please, they wanted to bribe her with a chain of gold; and there was one impudent fellow, with great eyes, who frightened her away at daybreak. Was it not so?"

"Something like it, I believe lady," answered the minstrel, glancing at one of his companions: "but were all to be judged by him?"

"Nay, I know not."

Here the dowager turning to Ambrosine said—

"We will retain these minstrels—they will furnish amusement for our noble guests."

Ambrosine made no reply, but remained with her eyes cast down, and averted from the musicians.

The minstrels received the Lady Roskelyn's order to stay, with thanks, and having been supplied by the vassals with food, retired to an apartment allotted to them.

In the meantime, Ambrosine was overwhelmed with confusion, for, on a near examination, she had recognised in the minstrels three of the outlaws, and particularly in the singer, the chief Monteith—a discovery which would have escaped her, they were so carefully disguised, had not he himself made the avowal, by alluding to what had passed at Barra.

Though she ardently wished to speak to Monteith, yet the construction that she was convinced must be put on her visit to Barra filled her with confusion; yet, determined not to consent to their stay in the castle, she resolved to overcome it, and at once to satisfy the decorum of her sex, by commanding his absence, and to satisfy her fears for his safety by causing him to return to the fortress.

CHAPTER XI.

AMBROSINE, accustomed to country life, rose early: while the dowager, following the manners of the court, slept late. The former, therefore, resolving to take advantage of the opportunity that occurred, ordered the minstrels to be called to play during her breakfast, dismissing the other attendants. When alone with the musicians, her confusion for some moments was so great as to deny her utterance, until Monteith, stepping forward, said—

"Pardon, fair Ambrosine, a deception of which gratitude is alone the cause. With hearts warm with love and friendship for our benefactor Ambrose, what was our rapture to recognize him in the heiress of Kintail? To express our thanks in so public an assembly was impossible; and we have taken this way to do so. I return, sweet maid, the dross which gained value by your gift"—so saying, he laid a bag at her feet—"but the obligation is written upon my heart in characters never to be effaced."

Ambrosine somewhat collected herself during the time that Monteith spoke, and, with dignified modesty, replied—

"I am convinced my conduct must appear somewhat extraordinary; but the secret is with men of honour. My father," continued she, "first interested me for St Clair Monteith. He spoke of him as the victim of the pride and vice of his mother, and a monument of the disgraceful weakness of his father; as the pride of his uncle's age, and, but for some youthful imprudences, an honour to his name and country. Misfortunes and valour are interesting to women I wished to see Monteith, but no opportunity happened until about two years since, when, after my father's death, I accompanied my mother to Lewis. One morning, sailing to Barnera with a youthful party on a pleasure excursion, one of my companions fixed my attention by pointing out the chief himself, who, with several of his friends, was also just landing on the coast. They passed us with the common salutation of touching their caps, and I saw them no more till I saw them at Barra."

"I remember it well," said St Clair; "but, blind infidel that I was, I noticed no particular object. Ambrosine once seen, is not formed to be overlooked."

"You have not forgotten to compliment," said she; "but excuse me —I wish to take advantage of this opportunity, in some measure, to exculpate myself, and also to satisfy the curiosity which I am convinced you must have on the subject."

Monteith and his companions bowed, and remained silent.

"Soon after our return to Kintail, I lost my mother. Distantly allied by blood, but nearer by the friendship of their early days, she left to the Dowager of Roskelyn the care of my minority; and, the last duties performed, I was for the first time conducted to the south of Scotland.

"When I became an inmate of the castle of Roskelyn, Monteith there was a constant theme; and, had I not before formed a decided opinion of him, I should, from accounts, have considered him a monster.

"Sometime previous to this, Monteith had sent an order for sixty marks on his estate. It was refused with insult; and, hearing the account, I planned to do an act which I knew my honoured father, had he lived, would not have disapproved. I refer to advancing the sum in

a manner to ensure its being received. I neither loved the dowager nor the countess of Roskelyn; and for the earl, at once the tool of his aspiring mother and the slave of his arrogant wife, I felt a sentiment to which I can give no other name than contempt.

"The earl's refusal to pay the demand of sixty marks, as I heard it related, filled me with anger and contempt; and some time after, feigning a dislike to some jewels I wore, I persuaded the countess to exchange with me for those I brought to Barra, and which, I had accidentally heard from an old domestic, were originally yours. You are now master of the whole secret, except the means I used to visit the fortress.

"The countess dowager, at my request, accompanied me to Kintail; but after a few days' stay, finding it gloomy, she visited her friends in the vicinity of Inverness. During her absence I executed my project, by engaging a small vessel appertaining to my nurse's husband, which conveyed me safely to you, and afterwards home. Such is my story. I confess I overstepped the boundaries prescribed my sex; but the motive excuses me to myself, and I trust will also to you."

"Oh maid most honoured!" said Monteith; "I have no words to express my gratitude and veneration. The slave of folly, the dupe of a face without a heart, to have been an object of attention to such a mind as thine, I blush for myself; but, gaining consequence by the distinction, I will endeavour to deserve it."

"To pretend a disregard to the safety of Monteith, whom I shall ever be happy to rank among my friends, would be dishonest. He is not safe at Kintail, and, if he will listen to the voice of reason, will immediately return to Barra. Nay, chief, at the word safety, you look as if you scorned it; I must therefore use another incentive. 'Tis against the honour of a maid like me to connive at young men being in the castle disguised. The punctilious refinements of my sex I do not comprehend: but the road to honour is plain, and never willingly shall Ambrosine deviate from its paths."

"Painful as these demands are, they shall be obeyed," said Monteith; "for the honour of Ambrosine is dearer than the blood that warms my heart."

"I thank you," replied she. "We shall meet again; but gratify me, I pray you, by taking back the money. I need it not; and a time will come for payment."

"Dearest maid, you forget that, in my journey south, I robbed myself in the person of Carnegie, and I am yet so well supplied that you must pardon me for declining your kindness. For the jewels I must still remain your debtor."

"To contend with you on the subject will, I see, be useless; but remember, I pray you, sirs, that you have all a friend, should occasion need; and now, however unwillingly, I must bid you farewell."

Monteith gazed on her in silence, but De Bourg, throwing himself at her feet, said—"Lady, you have honoured us by calling us your friends; surely you have not less kindness for that name than for the blind and lame minstrels whom you condescended to invite for a while to remain at the castle."

"The chevalier De Bourg, if I recollect right," said Ambrosine, smiling.

De Bourg bowed.

"Indeed, chevalier," continued she, "were you both blind and lame, I know not whether I should suffer your stay; as it is, it is impossible—nay, I owe you a return, for I protest you drove me from the fortress some hours before I intended, and now, I do but the same by you."

"A plague on the impudence of my eyes!" replied he; "for that offence, if I do not put them under such discipline, that those of the most demure monk in Scotland shall not outdo them; they shall never more dare glance at beauty, except in an oblique direction."

"I dare not ask," said Monteith, "even the respite of a few hours; yet our disguise baffles detection, and I wish to ask of Ambrosine a question of some moment."

"Ask it now. Nay, you hesitate," added she, after a short pause; "what nature can it be, to be disguised before friends so sincere as those before us."

"My question, lady, concerns only your own happiness; Monteith will never forget he is a banished man!"

The animated face of Ambrosine suddenly became serious. "That reproach was unmerited," said she; "but stay, if you please, until to-morrow morn, and then heaven send you fair winds and a safe return to Barra! I grieve to receive you in a manner so unworthy of you, but necessity must plead my excuse." So saying, she held her hand alternately to each of the outlaws, and then, with a step as light as that of a fabled sylph or fairy, left the hall.

During the rest of the day the minstrels were so diligent in the duties of their profession that they appeared never to have followed any other, and so far gained the good-will of the dowager that she repeated her commands for their remaining at the castle after supper. After supper, Ambrosine approaching them, as if to order some particular song, said in a low voice to Monteith—"If you have anything to communicate to me, I shall be in the south gallery when the bell tolls the hour of midnight."

The evening concluded, and the dowager and vassals retired to rest. Monteith hastened to the appointment, where, after waiting near half an hour, he was joined by Ambrosine, who brought with her a lighted taper.

"For this condescension much thanks," said he; "what I have to say will not long detain you, and I should have departed heavily had I not been permitted to ask a question, which, though our new acquaintance may not authorise, your candour will, I trust, excuse."

"Speak freely," she replied, "all you wish to-night, and cross the frith at early dawn, be it only to free me from the anxiety I experience while you are here."

"Your wishes are commands, dearest maid."

"Every hour," said she, "may bring the expected guests, in which case I could not support the dread of a discovery."

Monteith, almost unknown to himself, had taken the hand of Ambrosine. "Pardon me," said he, "but who are your expected guests?"

"The Lord and Lady Roskelyn, and the whole of their courtly friends."

"Comes the Knight of Lorn with them?"

"I know not, but I expect so; he is the dowager's shadow."

"The dowager is not his magnet, fair Ambrosine. May I take the liberty of a friend, and ask you if you can love him?"

"I love him not; he comes on a fruitless errand, and will return disappointed."

"My question is answered; from what I heard at the tournament I judged Sir James Stuart was not in possession of your heart. The dowager is designing and deep in policy where she wishes to gain her end, and, pardon me, the gentle Ambrosine will be no match for her arts."

"She dares not use them; but even should she, I am here surrounded by the vassals of my father's house, whom, if occasion needed, I would call together, and let her see that whatever I may be in the castle of Roskelyn, I am mistress here."

"Nobly resolved! But say, sweet maid, in such a case, whose arm would be nerved so strongly as that of Monteith!"

Ambrosine made no reply, but Monteith continued—

"Dearest Ambrosine, I speak not to dissuade you from marriage, but it must be to a man worthy of so estimable a heart, one equally loving and beloved; then will Monteith claim him as a brother, and, in the happiness of Ambrosine, endeavour to forget his own misfortunes."

"Monteith," said she, "I will never marry."

"Oh yes," replied he, "Ambrosine is formed to make the best and first of men happy."

Ambrosine was moved at St Clair's energy. "Is this happiness to be found at court?" said she, in a tremulous tone.

"It is to be found wherever you reside," replied Monteith, "be it in a court or in a cottage."

"In a court I will never seek it. But, deceiver that you are," added she, "you were not content in the payment of the exact sum—the contested chain I found concealed in the bag: and, to show you that I know how to receive a favour, I accept it—it shall be a pledge between us; and as there is no man's assistance in case of necessity, that I would so soon claim as yours, when I return it, it shall be either to demand your presence or counsel. Here, I am convinced, there is no danger; what there may be on our return to the south, I know not, though I do not fear. Monteith," she added, "I have pledged my word to claim your assistance; give me your honour, that should you need it, you will claim mine; my revenues are large, and I pray you command them. Hazard no more such encounters as that with Carnegie; nay, in this you must oblige me, or our contract is void."

Thus entreated, Monteith made the promise required, and pressing Ambrosine's hand, first to his lips, and then to his heart, he tore himself from her, and left the gallery.

He immediately joined M'Gregor and De Bourg, and hastening to the Frith, they crossed to the isle of Skye, from whence they sailed to Barra.

CHAPTER XII.

Some few days after, the families of Roskelyn and Stuart arrived. The young heiress received the guests with a grace and politeness peculiar to herself, though the combined efforts of both families, added to all the entreaties and address of Sir James himself, could effect nothing in his favour; and after a stay of a month, the party returned to Roskelyn, accompanied by the dowager and the heiress.

As Ambrosine conjectured, the persecution respecting the Knight of Lorn was there renewed with greater importunity. The queen also sent

for her to Stirling, and pressed her to determine in his favour, or to declare whether her heart felt a predilection for any other, but without success.

In the meantime the outlaws safely reached Barra, where the confinement was now doubly irksome to Monteith. Ambrosine, in spite of all his efforts, became his daily and nightly thoughts; but much as he loved her, her honour was yet dearer to him than the possession of her person, and he resolved at all events never to forget himself so far as to make her the wife of an outlaw.

De Bourg and the rest of the party laughed at his scruples; they all wished the happiness of St Clair, but thwarting the views of the house of Roskelyn gave them superior delight. The heir already in their possession, and Monteith once married to the heiress of Kintail, their power, not only in the islands, but also in Ross-shire, where her possessions lay, would be unbounded. While *they* revolved in their minds the utility of the plan, and the weight and consequence it would give Monteith, *he* considered only her welfare and honour. Happy he thought he could make her, but his heart sunk at the disgrace she must share. Sometimes he resolved to leave his country, and in the service of some foreign prince gain fame and fortune; but to leave Ambrosine a defenceless prey to persecution, and himself to espouse quarrels in which his heart had no share, and to fight for a hireling's price, never failed to crush the idea as it rose, and for the present, at least, made him resolve to remain at Barra.

In this state three months passed, when one morning a stranger was announced at the fortress. Enquiring for Monteith, he was immediately admitted.

"I bring a trinket and a letter," said he, "which I was commanded to deliver into the hands of the chief. I have used much despatch in travelling from Roskelyn, for I was nobly paid, and will only wait for an answer to return."

St Clair scarcely heard what he said, before tearing open the letter, he read as follows:—

"I am beset by fools, and surrounded with knaves, and am resolved to bear it no longer. Use all prudence, for I would not avoid a small evil at the expense of a greater. I put no superscription or name, in case of loss or other failure, but you will know the writer by the token. Adieu,"

"Return, my good friend, with all speed," said Monteith; "but I have a messenger that will be more swift than you,—however, should you reach Roskelyn before him, the answer is—'All is well, and fear not.'"

The outlaws then gave him refreshment, and St Clair, making him an ample present, hastened him away.

Willing as they all were to volunteer in this cause, it was thought necessary for two of the principals to remain at Barra, and drawing lots for that purpose, the chance fell upon M'Gregor and Hamilton. Monteith, Ross, and De Bourg, with the companions who had attended them at the tournament, then immediately engaged a vessel, and the wind serving, safely reached the port of Ardnamurchan, where they landed, and purchasing horses, continued their way with unremitting speed until they arrived at a small hamlet within six miles of Roskelyn. There

leaving their horses, Mouteith, Ross, and De Bourg clad themselves in palmer's weeds, and proceeded to Roskelyn. At a little distance they were followed by their companions dressed as herdsmen.

On reaching the vicinity of Roskelyn, the herdsmen took up their residence in a cottage, in order, as they said, to recover from their fatigue, while the pretended pilgrims proceeded to the castle, entreating admittance and refreshment for the love of the blessed St Cuthbert, to whose shrine they were travelling, in order to expiate the sins of their youth.

The vassals immediately admitted the supposed pilgrims into an outer hall among the domestics, where they were furnished with such food as cold charity allows.

Thankful of having anyhow gained an entrance, they soon learned that Sir James Stuart was at the castle, the Lord and Lady Roskelyn with the court at Stirling, and, that the dowager and her young charge were, on their return, to leave for Berwick.

Among the servants they found Ambrosine's waiting-maid, Bridget, and, after the other servants had gone, De Bourg pretended that St Bridget had instructed him in a dream to give her a ring; and to tell her to disclose the present to no one but a true virgin, under twenty years of age, of high blood, and the only child of her father, who should further instruct her in the saint's wishes.

A few moments after, Bridget was called to her household duties, when De Bourg, repeating his command, she left them.

By-and-bye the pilgrims were conducted to a chamber, allotted for such guests, in the left tower of the castle, and furnished with clean straw and coverlids.

CHAPTER XIII.

INTERESTED as the pilgrims were to procure an interview with Ambrosine, the impatience of Bridget equalled theirs, and hastening to the apartment of the heiress, she found her seated in deep reflection.

"Sweet lady," said she, "you were ever kind and good, and I have news to tell you."

"To tell me, Bridget! prithee then relate it."

"There be three pilgrims come to the castle to-night; they travel to Durham, to the shrine of St Cuthbert."

"Heaven speed them; I hope the saint will protect them on their journey, and reward their piety. Is this all thy news?"

"No, lady; the blessed St Bridget herself hath sent me a message."

"A message to thee! I pray thee to what purport?"

"Yes, lady, even to such a poor lowly damsel as myself; and I was to declare it to no one but a true maid under twenty, and who was the only child of her father; and now, lady, as I am sure that must be you, I will reveal it."

"What knave has persuaded thee to believe such folly?"

"No folly, lady; and for knaves, if the pilgrims be knaves, they must be pretty ones; their faces indeed are hardly to be seen for their hair, and the great hats they wear slouched over their foreheads,--but they look like lords, at least; and for one of them, he would be the king of

the world. As I stooped to pick up my thread, I caught a better view of his face—such fine black eyes, lady, and such a very fine shaped nose I never saw before."

"They have beguiled thee with their hypocrisy—give me my night-rail—I will away to bed—vexation hath made me heavy."

"Dear lady, ere you go, hear what I have got to say, as you alone can inform me what St Bridget's commands are for me. Sinner that I am, should I disregard her token, I dare not go to bed."

"Her token!" replied Ambrosine; "prithee Bridget, what token hath she sent thee; a pair of stripped garters, a sweet-cake in the shape of a heart, or the parings of her nails in a silk bag to wear about thy neck, to drive away evil spirits? if the last, I pray thee haste to put it on, that thou mayest not be so easily duped."

"You have a merry heart, lady, whatever betides you: but, pardon me, 'tis sinful to jest on such subjects. The blessed Bridget commanded one of the pilgrims in a dream to give me neither more nor less than this beautiful ring."

"Gracious Heaven!" exclaimed Ambrosine, snatching the ring, "is William returned from the commission I sent him upon?"

"No, lady; had he, right well do I know he would have been here, not only for your sake, but for mine."

"True," answered Ambrosine, pausing; "it is impossible he should. But these pilgrims, thou sayest, are men of noble port, one of them particularly?"

"Yes, lady; the silent one is so tall and stately, that when he stood by the vassals of the house, he seemed to look down upon them: and surely if strangers had come in, they would have drawn back, and have supposed him lord of the castle at least; in good truth, I felt ashamed to see them seated in the outward hall."

"Bridget, I must see these pilgrims."

"You, lady! will you then tell me further of the saint?"

"Undoubtedly, if she communicates it to me. Where are the dowager and the knight of Lorn?"

"In the great hall, at supper."

"Where are the pilgrims?"

"In the travellers' chamber in the left tower: shall I order them to attend you, lady?"

"Not for your life, Bridget; this business must be private; the family retired to rest, we will venture to the tower, and hear further of thy fate and mine."

"Think you, then, lady, that these men be diviners?"

"No; yet, if I mistake not, the future happiness or misery of my life depends upon one of them, and 'tis necessary I consult him thereon, yet see thou keep it secret."

"I will; but pray do not forget, lady, to ask him further respecting the commands of St Bridget to me."

"Undoubtedly not, though I can in part already inform thee. If thou keepest this secret with truth and honour, it is the will of the holy Bridget that you wed William, and that I give thee a marriage portion."

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed she, "reward the blessed saint for her goodness to me, and you also; but did you dream it, lady?"

"It matters not now for you to know how I gained the information I

possess, so thou gettest a good husband and a marriage portion; but, should a word escape thee, 'tis all void."

"Never fear me, lady," said Bridget; I would sooner be dumb as a monk than hazard such a loss."

"'Tis well; here take thy ring, but, for the present, show it to no one; and for the white robe I wore yesterday, take that—thou mayest convert it into a wedding garment; nay, no thanks—defer them, I pray thee; hie thee into the castle, and carefully observe when all are gone to rest; and bring me intelligence, and also a fresh taper to light us to the strangers."

"Shall you not fear to venture to the tower to-night, lady?"

"Surely not; if thou fearest remain behind."

"Marry, Heaven forbid! I would follow you to the world's end; St Bridget, I have no doubt, will guide us through every danger."

"Haste thee away then, but be cautious: I will extinguish my taper, as if I were retiring to rest, and will wait thy return in darkness."

Bridget did as she was commanded; a husband and a marriage portion were objects too material to be lost for so trivial a duty; and, though she longed to relate the high favour she was in with the saint, yet she resolved to restrain herself until either the pilgrims or Ambrosine set her tongue at liberty on the subject.

Ambrosine left alone, could scarcely believe it possible that the outlaws should have reached Roskelyn in so short a space of time. The conduct of Monteith at Kintail, and the almost incredible speed he had used, flattered her that she was not indifferent to him. Oh!" said she, "should it be the fortune of mine to retrieve the character of my sex in the mind of so noble a man, how gladly should I relinquish all the false glare of the court for the dreary rocks among which he dwells!"

Such were the reflections of Ambrosine till Bridget joined her, when she informed her all was quiet in the castle, and the lights extinguished; after a short consultation, they took the way to the tower where the pilgrims lodged.

As they passed through the lower galleries of the castle, and crossed the courts, the owls and bats, disturbed by the glare of the taper from their ivy haunts on the turrets, hooted and skimmed around them, to the great annoyance of Bridget, who, considering them as the harbingers of goblins or devils, did not cease a moment in recommending herself in silent prayer, to her patron saint; while Ambrosine passed fearlessly and lightly forward, waving the taper to defend herself from the too near approach of such intruders.

On reaching the tower, Ambrosine left Bridget below, and with less firmness ascended the stairs, and gaining the apartment, hesitated whether she should knock. At length, with forced courage, she struck gently at the door, and was instantly answered by Monteith, who demanded who was there. Certified by the voice of St Clair, she replied—"Ambrosine of Kintail, who wishes to hold a short conference with the pilgrims, whom she will wait for in the lower apartment.

Before Ambrosine could descend, the door was unbarred, and she saw the outlaws all completely clothed, though without their cloaks, and seated on benches in the apartment, had their swords unsheathed before them, and daggers in their girdles.

She shuddered at the sight, but St Clair, advancing, re-assured her—

"First of women!" said he, "why have you ventured here at this hour? to-morrow might have been more convenient, than crossing the castle in the dead of the night, as you must have done. We have devised the means of staying another day: De Bourg will feign sickness, and the rights of hospitality cannot be denied us."

Ambrosine held out her hand. "I grieve," said she, "to give you this trouble, and tremble lest I should involve you in danger; but, young and defenceless, I have no one to take my part, and have only a respite of a few days allowed me, to determine whether I will wed the Knight of Lorn, or pass the remaining two years of my minority in the convent of Franciscan nuns at Berwick. The knight I think not of, nor have I any decided aversion to a convent, except that of the Minoresses, whose abbess I well know to be a creature of the dowager, and I have no doubt would make my situation very disagreeable there. What I would entreat is, that you would assist me in getting hence. On the north side of the Tay, at the foot of the Grampian Hills, there is a monastery of black monks, and also a convent of nuns, who would doubtless receive me, for a good consideration, until I could claim my own."

Monteith pressed her hand to his heart in silence, while De Bourg and Ross swore to die in her defence.

"Heaven forbid," said she, "I should need so dangerous proof of your friendship! prepare but fleet horses—I can ride with the best of ye, and we will soon be safe from pursuit."

"We are," replied Monteith, "already provided; they are not more than six miles from hence: one for you is alone wanting, and that we will immediately procure."

"Need you money?" said she.

"No," interrupted De Bourg; "I am cash-bearer, and the trash is plenty."

"'Tis well," replied she; "I must hasten, for time wastes. To-morrow, at the hour of midnight, cross the court that leads to this tower, and under the portal on the right hand is a small door, which opens to the chapel; you may easily unbar it, and in the aisle await my coming."

So saying, she held her hand to each, but last to Monteith, who, clasping it, and taking his sword, declared he would see her across the court. Ambrosine would have denied, but St Clair insisted; she gave him the taper, when, placing her arm under his, he descended the stairs, where they found the trembling Bridget awaiting the return of her mistress.

"Bridget," said Ambrosine, "all is well; remember the promise of secrecy; not only thy fate but mine depends upon it."

Bridget made no reply, but by a bend of the knees, so great was her astonishment to see her mistress accompanied as she was.

On reaching the lower gallery, Ambrosine stopped, and would have bidden St Clair farewell, but, holding her hand, he entreated her to stay a few moments, placing the taper in a recess, and Bridget retiring a few paces, he said—"Is there no other plan than your wasting two of the best years of your life in a convent, whence you are not certain but the partiality of the queen for the Dowager of Roskelyn and the Knight of Lorn, might force you?"

"I see all my danger, but I know no alternative," replied she; "know you of any?"

"Alas, no!" answered he, with a heavy sigh. "Oh, Ambrosine, could I recall the past! but the wish is vain—sorrow is mine for ever."

"Say not so; when we last met, you questioned me closely; shall I use the same freedom with you?"

"Assuredly."

"You asked me if I loved the Knight of Lorn; I replied, truly, that I did not; now, answer me—love you still the Lady Roskelyn?"

"No, on my honour! three years has she been to me as nothing. If I remember her now at all, it is with satisfaction that she has spared me the greatest of misfortunes, that of being her husband."

"I am a strange, bold girl, but pardon me—love you any one else?"

"Ambrosine, I am a banished man, and dare not love."

"Ridiculous refinement; to punish your enemies in the most effectual manner, would be to let them see you happy, in spite of their machinations; but we must part—the day will soon dawn. Fail not to be with your companions in the chapel at midnight, and leave the rest to fortune. Remember to-morrow night, and Heaven guide you."

"Oh, Ambrosine!" replied he, with an emotion he could not repress, "would I had known thee sooner, or never—"

"Finish not the sentence," said she, jestingly; "know you not the proverb—Better late than never? But once more, farewell."

Monteith made no reply, but leaving the court, gained the tower, where his companions awaited him.

Ambrosine, in the meantime, with Bridget, crossed through the interior of the castle in silence to the apartment of Ambrosine, where she detained Bridget during the remainder of the night, or rather morning.

CHAPTER XIV.

In the morning, De Bourg feigned sickness so artfully that he was permitted to remain in the apartment allotted to the travellers. Ross, the better to support the deception, remained with him; while Monteith joined his companions at the cottage, and gave them charge to fetch the horses, and also to purchase one for Ambrosine.

Under pretence of carrying something to the sick pilgrim, Bridget brought intelligence that at noon the same day William had arrived safe, and asked if they remembered the way to the chapel.

"We do," replied Monteith. "Bear to your mistress our best wishes. We will not fail her."

During the whole of the day, Ambrosine kept her apartment as much as possible, and towards evening, complaining of indisposition, she retired early.

It was an hour beyond midnight before all was quiet in the castle, when, taking her jewels, she resolved to venture. With a light but trembling step she passed the gallery where her own chamber was situated, and crossing the great stairs that led to the grand apartment, she entered the gallery appertaining to the dowager and her retinue.

All appeared quiet around her, until leaving the suite of apartments to descend to the lower storey, she thought she heard a step above, and the whispering of distant voices, which the echo of the high roof conveyed to her ear. Thoroughly alarmed, yet too far advanced to draw back, she

extinguished her taper, and proceeded in silent haste through the lower galleries into the first court, when, by the imperfect light of the moon, she discovered a man leaning against one of the buttresses. Her alarm, however, was of short duration, for, directed by her white garments, he advanced.

"Dearest Ambrosine!" said Monteith.

"Peace, on your life!" said she, in a low voice; I fear I am pursued, and that the extinguishment of my taper has alone prevented me being overtaken."

Monteith clasped her hand, and hastening forward, said—"They must be bold fellows who take you from me. And now, surely, there is no cause to fear; we are six, and, well armed, are equal to treble our number."

As he spoke, they reached the door of the chapel, when Ambrosine, turning, saw a light crossing the outward gallery of the court, and the moment after, heard voices articulating her name. Trembling, she threw herself into Monteith's arms.

"Oh fly, St Clair," said she, "I conjure thee! I have brought thee here to death. Wretch that I am, when I would have given my life to have saved thine!"

"Beloved of my soul!" said St Clair, forgetting both prudence and caution, and clasping her to his heart, "fear not; all will be well; your distress can alone unnerve my arm."

As he spoke, he bore her into the chapel, where he informed his companions of the danger, and bade them stand prepared, as he feared their enemies were too near to be avoided.

The light which beamed through the door of the chapel, and which Monteith in his haste had left unclasped, directed their pursuers, who, a moment after, rushed in, to the number of ten, at the head of whom were the Knight of Lorn and Lady Roskelyn.

Monteith instantly placed Ambrosine, who scarcely breathed, on the steps of the altar, and, with his companions, unsheathed his sword, advancing in a posture of defence. The vassals had been hastily called, and most of them being unarmed, drew back at so formidable a sight; but Sir James, who, at his entrance, caught a glimpse of Ambrosine in the arms of Monteith, coming forward, and singling him out, said—"If thou art worthy the love of the heiress of Kintail, thy single arm to mine."

"Willingly," said St Clair. "'Tis not the first time thou and I have met. Thou owest a fall to the Danish knight; take death from the arm of Monteith."

"Monteith!" exclaimed Sir James, starting, and drawing back some paces, leaning on his sword.

"It is Monteith," said the dowager, "who, regardless of his king, tramples on the rights of the Lord of Roskelyn, and now, not only commits theft in the person of the heiress, but also adds the crime of sacrilege."

"Talk you, unfeeling woman, of rights destroyed, when you look at me?" replied Monteith. "The knight speaks nobly. Hand to hand let us decide it. If I fall, so rest my soul as I free him from my death! and, as my blood flows, lady, remember it hath no disgrace but what it inheriteth from you."

The dowager trembled, and leant on one of the attendants, while Sir James drew farther back.

"Nay, Sir Knight, shun me not. See you that monument," continued he, pointing to one of the late Lord Roskelyn, "under it lies the husband of that woman. May his spirit witness the combat, and, if there be dishonour, that it sits not on the shield of Monteith. You tremble, vain woman, and turn pale. You—you talk of sacrilege!—you who have profaned every duty, sacred and human! Your first fault was venial, but your next was of the dye of hell; and here I warn you to repentance—here, before the altar of your God and of my God, and before the tomb of your husband and of my father."

"Gallant Monteith," said the Knight of Lorn, throwing down his sword, "if it be possible, grant me thy pardon! The tale of St Clair's wrongs, sorrows, and oppressions, I have heard indistinctly, but till this hour never knew their amount."

"Nor do you now, brave Stuart," replied Monteith, following his ex ample, and throwing down his weapon; "command my life—at the call of friendship it shall freely come forth; but for Ambrosine, she hath a dearer claim—she shall be free, for though a banished man must not love her, he can still protect her."

"Valiant chief, I yield. When I add to your misfortunes, may they revert on my own head." Then, turning to the dowager, he added, "Dismiss your vassals, lady; neither you nor I shall gain honour by this business. For you, St Clair, you must yield to necessity, but should opportunity ever offer, remember you have a friend in James Stuart."

"As he spoke, he held out his hand, which Monteith receiving, said—"I thank ye, noble knight, and if you can accept that of an outlaw, command mine."

"And will you suffer him," said the dowager, addressing Sir James, "to bear away Ambrosine? Is this the assistance I claimed from you?"

"Lady," replied he, "the story of St Clair Monteith, though his person was unknown to me, has long been familiar to my ear, and made the impression which we feel from fabled sorrow and oppression. I find the truth of what I before heard, certified by him, and undenied by you, and never shall my sword be raised against him. For your designs in my favour much thanks, but I relinquish all claim to the Lady Ambrosine, and entreat she may speak her own intention and wishes, in which I swear to coincide."

Ambrosine, somewhat recovered by the amicable conversation that had passed, stood up and said:—

"Sir James, a better love than mine hangs over you: may you be blessed to the extent of your wishes!"

"Fortune attend you," replied Sir James; "Lady Roskelyn, I will no more to do in this business." So saying, he left the chapel.

"Poltroons!" exclaimed the dowager, turning to the vassals, "why stand ye like statues? call your comrades; though a woman, I am not to be braved thus."

"The man that offers to stir, dies," said Monteith. "Your rage and force are equally vain—Ambrosine shall be secured from your malice. Come, sweet maid," added he, placing her arm under his, and taking his sword in his right hand, "you shall be our pilot, fear not, they must fight well who rob us of so fair a prize."

So saying, he took the way from the chapel through the sacristy, preceded by De Bourg, and followed by the rest of his companions.

They lost no time in gaining the wood and mounting their horses. Monteith wrapped his palmer's cloak round Ambrosine, at once to con ceal her figure and to shield her from the cool morning air. Conjecturing that their enemies would pursue northward, they took their way to the south, and by ten in the morning reached Selkirk, where, procuring refreshment for themselves and their beasts, they continued to Drumlanrig. Thence, after a few hours' repose, they pursued their way to the coast, where they embarked in a vessel bound to Carrickfergus.

In the meantime, the dowager despatched messengers different ways, in order to gain intelligence of the heiress, but in vain.

Bridget was also questioned, but true to her trust, she confessed only that she visited the pilgrims with Ambrosine, but denied that she considered them in any other light. This confession she was reduced to make by the dowager, who declared that the night preceding the flight of Ambrosine, a light shining through the lattice over the door of her chamber, and her dog barking, she had hastily risen, and to her great amazement seen the heiress and Bridget passing through the gallery with a taper.

The circumstance, however, made but a transient impression, as Ambrosine frequently sat till very late in the upper gallery that faced the sea, admiring the view by the light of the moon.

The restraint of Ambrosine during the day awakened her suspicion, and she communicated what she had seen the night before to Sir James Stuart, and entreated him to watch with her the ensuing night. An hour after midnight, Ambrosine passed with the taper, and, to their further astonishment, alone, on which the knight in silence pursued her, but on her extinguishing the light he lost his way, and was obliged to return to the dowager's chamber. Alarmed at the knight's report of Ambrosine's caution, she immediately accompanied him in the pursuit, awakening the vassals who slept in that department of the castle. Calling loudly on Ambrosine, they hastened through the galleries, but her speed had exceeded theirs, and she would in all probability have escaped undiscovered, had not the light from the chapel directed their steps.

CHAPTER XV.

The travellers, on landing at Carrickfergus, concluding themselves safe from danger, tarried a few days to repose from their fatigue, Ambrosine purchasing a change of apparel, and engaging a female attendant.

One day, Monteith being alone with her, she said, "St Clair, though our actions be pure as those of angels, what thinkest thou the world will say of a damsel of my age, wandering by land, and voyaging by sea, with such a set of bold fellows as thee and thy comrades?"

"Ambrosine," replied he, "do not awaken unpleasant reflections; thy honour is dearer to me than my life, and never will I suffer it to be sullied by the breath of scandal."

"Then wilt thou need as many arms as the giant Briareus, and as many lives as he had heads, yet find them all too few. I must expiate this mad freak in a convent. Where thinkest thou I shall be placed—in England, Ireland, or Scotland?"

"Alas! I shudder at the bare thought of parting from you—but it

must be. Choose where you will, I will see you safe, and then what further business hath Monteith with life?"

The depression with which he spoke sunk to the heart of Ambrosine.

"Monteith," said she, turning from him to conceal the burning crimson that covered her neck and bosom, "dost thou love me?"

"Love thee!" repeated he, all caution banished by the question; "no, the word is too poor, and bears no similitude to my feelings; thou art dearer to me than life or light—I adore thee!"

"Then must I go to a convent?"

"Alas! I know not. I am but man. Spare me, Ambrosine, from a temptation too hard to resist."

"Monteith," said she, raising her soft blue eyes to his, "have ye no room for me to dwell at Barra?"

"Angelic tempter!" exclaimed he, clasping her with his arm, "thou dwellest in my heart, and never shall it know another love. But to take thee to Barra—impossible—thee, to waste thy youth and beauty amidst the savage mountains of the Hebrides."

"There is no criterion for taste," answered she. "But enough, I will away to the first convent; I have stepped over the boundaries prescribed my sex, and thou lovest me not."

"Cruel and unjust accusation! Nay, did I possess a diadem, it could only gain value by being shared with thee."

"Then pride is stronger than love in thy heart. Remember, Monteith, that love had conquered pride in mine, or I had never come to Barra, or claimed thy protection at Roskelyn."

"Generous maid! never can it be forgotten. Oh Ambrosine! wherever thou goest, thou wilt ever be my daily thoughts and my nightly dreams."

"That I love you, Monteith, I, alas! have given proofs beyond all denial; and we but court pain to prolong a separation which must take place. In the vicinity of Belfast there is a convent of Benedictine sisters; and thither will I with to-morrow's dawn."

"Hateful thought! must we so soon part?"

"You said so," answered she.

"Dearest maid, cruel in your kindness; the effort must be yours; I can never make it."

"Nay, then, how should I, that am a weak woman?"

De Bourg and Ross entering, prevented more discourse. Monteith appeared out of spirits during the evening, and Ambrosine retired early to rest.

In the morning they were but just assembled when Ambrosine entered accoutred for a journey.

"Good day," said she, addressing them. "I go to Belfast. Ye are not old, but ye are dear friends."

They all crowded round her, one asking the reason of such sudden haste, another entreating her to defer her intention, and a third praying a respite of a day; while De Bourg, pressing her hand respectfully to his lips, at once dropt a tear on it, and muttered a curse on folly and false honour.

Ross and Monteith stood apart. Advancing towards the first, Ambrosine said—

"Accept at once, Sir James, my thanks and farewell. Let not, I conjure you, your impetuous valour lead you into dangers. Your enemies

may, indeed, a while triumph, but the sun of prosperity will again shine upon St Clair."

As she concluded, her voice was less articulate, and a sickly paleness overspread her complexion.

"Oh, Ambrosine!" exclaimed Monteith, clasping her in his arms, "beloved of my soul, it is impossible; I can sooner yield my life; thou makest me a villain; thou must never leave me. Say, canst thou condescend to be the wife of a banished man?"

Ambrosine made no reply, but withdrew herself from his arms; and, with her face dyed with blushes, left the apartment.

Monteith instantly followed her.

"Ambrosine," said he, "I dare not reflect; I, that would willingly make thee empress of the whole world, have nothing to offer thee but a heart, and that bleeding with a thousand wrongs."

"I will endeavour to heal thee, Monteith."

Monteith kissed off a tear that hung on her cheek, and, while clasped to his heart, he pressed to let the rites of the church immediately make them one.

She complied; and, at an early hour the ensuing morning, they were united in a small chapel at Carrickfergus, her female attendant and their mutual friends being present.

Aware of the uneasiness their companions at Barra must suffer on their account, they resolved to hasten thither as speedily as possible.

CHAPTER XVI.

During their voyage, St Clair would have informed Ambrosine of the capture of the heir of Roskelyn, but a promise the residents of the fortress had unanimously made, not to disclose the secret without the concurrence of each other, restrained him.

On their arrival at Barra, they were received with transport, but particularly Ambrosine, whom they all regarded as the instrument of their friend's happiness and future prosperity.

Scarcely were the travellers seated, and refreshment placed before them, when little Randolph ran in, and, seeing Monteith, climbed upon his knees, and saluted him with the name of father. Monteith tenderly kissed him, saying—

"Thou comest unexpectedly. "I wished first," added he, "to have entered into some explanation with Ambrosine."

As he spoke he placed the young Randolph on her knee, but was astonished to see her pale, and scarcely able to support herself upon her seat.

"Ambrosine!" cried he, in a voice of alarm, "why thus disordered?"

"Monteith," cried she, "art thou a man of honour?"

"Have I lived to hear thee doubt it?" answered he.

"Then whence comes it this boy is here?" said she, fixing her eyes strongly upon him.

"'Tis what I wished to explain to thee, but was not at liberty without the consent of my companions. Do not suspect me of any unworthy act."

"How comes it, then," replied she, "that I find the heir of Roskelyn in the isle of Barra?"

"Know you the boy?" said Monteith.

"I do; even without the testimony of his arm, which, being covered, I have not seen. When in the castle of Roskelyn, he was my favourite companion, and, by his fondness for me, appeared to consider me more nearly allied to him than his mother."

"The boy had judgment," said Monteith. "Our secret discovered, my companions will explain the whole, and endeavour to recover your good opinion."

The outlaws then related the means by which Montrose had fallen into their hands. "Had the grief of his parents been such as I think mine would have been for the loss of such a child," said St Clair, "no personal advantage could have obliged me to detain him; but on my enquiry, even when I first saw you, Ambrosine, you remarked his mother's want of feeling."

"It is too true," replied she, "I pray ye all pardon me; but, though I could wish this deed undone, I cannot but confess that good, rather than evil, may result from it. Come then, my poor boy," said she, taking him to her bosom, "thou shalt not want a mother."

The marriage of Monteith was not only celebrated in the island, but also in all those around; and if, heretofore, Ambrosine found herself an object of attention at Kintail and the court of Scotland, at Barra she was regarded as a queen.

As the household economy is ever best conducted by a female, the fortress speedily began to assume a new aspect; the inhabited part was repaired, and Ambrosine despatched a vassal to Kintail, ordering such furniture to be sent as made it commodious to them all.

The polished and active mind of Ambrosine, by insensible degrees, smoothed the roughness of the manners of her companions, who were all so respectfully attentive to her wishes, that she would sometimes say —"Surely there is not a woman in this country, nor I believe in any other, so happy as myself; for I have the best husband in the world, and a family of the most affectionate brothers."

When the weather was fair, she sailed with them among the islands, and partook of their amusements; in the dreary season she sung, or tuned her lute or harp, to beguile their hours.

These pleasurable hours were broken in upon by information they received from William and Bridget, who reached them during the gloom of winter, that the dowager and the Lord Roskelyn, by repeated appeals, had at length succeeded in persuading the king to send a force sufficient to bring the whole of the inhabitants of the fortress to Edinburgh, a plan which was, however, deferred till the ensuing spring.

CHAPTER XVII.

MONTEITH and his companions laughed at the menacing danger. "The only point," said St Clair, in which I am vulnerable is Ambrosine, who is not formed to encounter the inconveniences to which I have subjected her."

"Judge for thyself," replied she gaily; "when I resolved on such a desperate action as passing my life with thee, I made up my mind to all the trifling alarms that I might possibly encounter. When I enervate

thee with fear, reproach me, but till then, let me enjoy the reputation of courage."

From the first interview St Clair had with the feigned Ambrosine, she had engaged his esteem, and the discovery of De Bourg had almost, unknown to himself, given softer feelings to that sentiment; but when, adorned with her sex's charms, he saw her at the tournament, where with native dignity she answered the queen, by a bold refusal of the Knight of Lorn, his heart became her willing captive, though resolved to combat his passion, rather than to suffer her to share his disgrace. Her dependence on his honour, by claiming his protection to rescue her from the arts of the Dowager of Roskelyn, and her subsequent conduct, when assured he truly loved her, riveted his affection; and unable to combat it, he felt it was more easy to resign his life than to part from her. Marriage, which is said to calm the effervescence of passion, in St Clair had a different effect; and the blooming Ambrose coming to relieve his wants at Barra, the lovely Ambrosine bearing away the prize of beauty at the court of Scotland, or the heiress of Kintail, gracing the noble hall of her ancestors, did not appear half so lovely in his eyes as the wife of the outlaw Monteith clad in a simple Highland vest, a short petticoat, with her hair wantoning in the wind, as she climbed the mountains, in smooth paths holding the young Randolph by the hand, or in rougher ways, with sportive playfulness threw him over her shoulder, and agile as the deer, ran till she gained the summit.

Since Randolph M'Gregor's death, St Clair, as before observed, had become warmly attached to his young name-sake; but the affection Ambrosine testified for him, and his childish gratitude in returning it, speedily gave him redoubled interest in the heart of Monteith, so that he would sometimes say, as he caressed the rosy boy—"Thy mother, as she calls herself, hath communicated some of her fascinating power to thee, for, in spite of my resolution, and the invincible enmity I bear thy parents, I love thee, Randolph."

In the meantime, the spring advanced, and the attack upon the isles with a strong force, was loudly rumoured abroad. Monteith and his companions neglected nothing to secure themselves from danger; William, and some of the friends of the outlaws, had brought from Kintail all they thought necessary for defence, while others had visited the isles and made known the threatened danger to the inhabitants, who, almost to a man, had sworn to die in their cause, rather than yield.

One morning in the month of June, sentinels which they had kept for some time on the watch-tower, gave notice that four vessels, though at a considerable distance, were sailing towards the coast.

Not doubting but these contained their threatened foes, the inhabitants of the fortress rose hastily, and ringing the alarm-bell, speedily found themselves reinforced by numbers, each man pressing to be directed how he might be employed most effectually for the common benefit; some were immediately stationed to guard the fortress, others embarked in large sea-boats, on the opposite side of the island from the invaders, and hastened to Kismul, Vatersa, and the adjacent isles, from whence, before noon, they returned so deeply laden with men, that they appeared momentarily in danger of sinking. In the meantime, Monteith and his companions, completely armed, prepared to meet their enemies on that part of the coast towards which they appeared to direct their course.

William was in the party of St Clair; he was the son of an ancient vassal of the house of Roskelyn, who, well acquainted with the story of Monteith's oppressions, had aroused all the ardour of his son in the cause. From Ralph, the father of William, Ambrosine had first learned which were the particular jewels of Monteith, and, by the advice of the old man, she had made him her messenger to the isle of Barra; nor had she cause to repent the trust, for, though warmly attached to Bridget, he had preserved the secret of his destination even from her. At the time of Ambrosine's flight, Ralph was at Stirling, attending the earl and countess, but on his return, consented to what Ambrosine requested, and seeing the young people united, dismissed them, though privately, to Kintail.

William, anxious to deserve the kindness of the chief, pressed to be near him, while Bridget, unequal to imitate the conduct of her mistress, clung to his garments, wrung her hands, and shrieked aloud. "Fie upon you, woman!" said Ambrosine, with more severity than she had ever before assumed: "call you that noise grief, or love for your husband? Believe me, 'tis neither, but mere selfishness; for love would teach you to compose, not to ruffle the spirits of a man at such a moment of danger. Come," added she, with more softness, "give me your hand; equal sufferers in this cause, we will condole and comfort each other." So saying, she led the weeping Bridget within the fortress, and commanded the gates to be securely closed.

Though she had supported the conflict nobly in sight of the warriors, for some time after her entrance her spirits sunk, and she remained in silent anguish; at length, shaking off the lethargy of sorrow, she retired to her apartment, whence, after remaining some time, she came forth, and with composure, gave her attendants orders to prepare refreshment for their numerous friends. Taking young Randolph by the hand, she then mounted to the watch-tower, from whence she discovered that the vessels of the enemy had reached the coast on the one side, while on all the open parts of the island the sea-boats were busied in landing men they had brought from those adjacent.

Freed from all other observation, with young Randolph's arms clasped around her neck, Ambrosine gave free vent to the anguish that overpowered her, while he, charmed with the sight of the burnished weapons glittering in the sun, alternately kissed off her tears, and clapping his hands in transport, exclaimed,—"Let me go to them! let me go to them!"

Monteith's little army, of about eight hundred men, took their station at some distance from the coast, until they had suffered a part of their enemies to land; then advancing towards them, he demanded the cause of their coming, and commanded them to desist from their disembarkation, under pain of an instant attack.

"We come," replied Sir John Murray, who commanded the expedition, and saw with dismay the strength of his opposers, "in the name of the king of Scotland, to arrest, by his authority, the five outlaws, Monteith, De Bourg, Hamilton, Ross, and M'Gregor, and likewise whoever may be found abetting them in the fortress of Barra."

"Marry, then," interrupted De Bourg, "but you will see some warm work; but here we are, win us and wear us."

Monteith, without noticing the answer of De Bourg, replied—"For

the commands of the king of Scots, we feel no other sentiment than contempt; he knows his power in the court of Scotland, but he has yet to learn that of the men he hath unjustly banished, in this and the neighbouring isles."

"Ye then refuse peremptorily to yield to the king's mandate?" said Sir John Murray.

"We do," answered Monteith. "I also warn you of your danger, which if you would avoid, retire to your vessels; but if ye attempt to execute your king's commands, behold us ready; disembark the rest of your men—we fear ye not, but stand prepared to decide the contest."

The determined manner of Monteith, and the power which surrounded him, made Sir John Murray pause; but the strict commands he had received left him no choice. "Ye offer nobly, chief," replied he. "I would we were friends! but it cannot be—our lives would pay the forfeiture of our trust."

"'Tis well," said Monteith. "We allow ye yet half-an-hour; the mid-day sun shall behold the conflict." Monteith then broke off the conference, and, turning to his friends, arranged his men.

The Scots' forces made a far more formidable appearance than those of Monteith, but the fire and ardour of the chief appeared to have communicated itself to his followers, and the given time being elapsed, he led them to the conflict.

"Follow me, brave islanders," said he. "The sun is now at its height; and if we drive them not back to their ships ere it sinks beneath the horizon, disgrace be ours! Come on! follow me! the word is Victory or death!"

Thus speaking, followed by his men repeating his words, he rushed upon his foes with such impetuosity that they were thrown into confusion, and, with a quick eye, singling out their chief, "Commander," said he, "your arm to mine—should either fall, the contest will be the sooner decided."

"Thus challenged, Sir John Murray could not decline the combat; but the skill and strength of Monteith speedily brought him to the earth, and so severely wounded him in the right arm, that he could not raise his sword. "Take your life," said St Clair, "and let some of your men bear you to your vesssel; we will no prisoners." Then, rushing into the thickest of the fight, with the assistance of his friends, the discomfited Scots, deprived of their chief, speedily began to give way, and, flying before the islanders, endeavoured to gain their ships. "Drive them to their ships," exclaimed St Clair; "but remember mercy. Lift your hands against none but those who resist. Suffer them to take their wounded from the field. Seek out our friends in the same sad state, and bear them to the fortress. Our gentle hostess there shall tend their sick-bed."

The Scots lost no time in using the permission granted them; and, taking up their wounded, they bore them to their ships, while the islanders, on their part, carried theirs, only ten in number, to the fortress.

With strained eyes and beating heart, Ambrosine remained on the tower until the parties met, when, unable to bear the sight, she concealed her fears in her chamber, where she remained until the cry of triumph reached the gates of the fortress; then, descending to the hall, she received the wounded, and giving them in charge to those who had

guarded the tower, to bind their wounds, she herself went round, recruited their spirits with wine and such food as was proper for them to receive. She was thus employed when St Clair and his friends returned, and, her task completed, she flew to receive them.

"By Heaven!" said he, snatching her to his breast, "had I never seen thee till this minute, thou hadst gained my heart; thou art formed for a soldier's wife."

"I thank Providence for the distinction; but say, how are our friends?"

"Our friends, except those thou hast seen, thank Heaven, are well. What has passed was mere boy's play. On the fall of their leader, Sir John Murray, they fled to their vessels like hunted deer to the covert."

"Alas!" replied she, "is he slain?"

"No, my best love, merely wounded in the arm. But come, such food as we have, let us share with our friends."

"Pardon my forgetfulness; but all is ready within. Both men and maidens act as cooks; the ovens and pots of the fortress are filled with our stores."

"I thank you for your care. Our friends shall refresh themselves with what we have now; to-morrow some beasts shall be slaughtered to supply the deficiency."

The whole party kept watch during the night; and in the morning they had the satisfaction to see their enemies at a considerable distance from the coast.

The news of the defeat of the king's forces speedily reached the court, to the great vexation of the sovereign, as well as to that of the Earl of Roskelyn and his haughty countess. With the latter, the fascinations of power and rank had begun to lose their charms and novelty; and, as Ambrosine had once remarked, though stretched on her silken couch, she could now almost envy the wife of the outlaw St Clair. Perhaps the principal motive for this change was jealousy. Her heart sickened at the account that had transpired of their mutual happiness; and though she had rejected Monteith, it awakened all the rancour of her depraved heart, to hear he was so entirely devoted to another. For the dowager, she had lived a life of greater retirement than she was accustomed, since her meeting Monteith in the chapel. Sir James Stuart, she had no doubt, would disclose what had passed there; and the same pride which had made her sacrifice every duty to its gratification, now goaded her with perpetual thorns, lest she should see the fabric of vanity and falsehood destroyed, and her shame and cruelty revealed to the whole world.

Peace restored, in the midst of the accustomed harmony which reigned at the fortress, Ambrosine gave birth to a daughter.

On St Clair's entering her chamber, Randolph, who had been long watching an opportunity, slipped in, and, fearful of being turned out, hid himself behind the arras. Monteith flew to his idolised wife, and blessed Heaven for her safety, with a transport that banished all remembrance of past suffering.—"Prithee, Monteith," said she, with her usual gaiety, "spare thy raptures, though, when I tell thee 'tis only a girl, they will naturally cease. For my part, I am so provoked, that thou mayest e'en nurse her thyself."

"Willingly," replied he, folding the infant to his heart. "Methinks she already resembles thee, in which case she will be dearer to me than all the boys in the world without that advantage."

"That will be no recommendation to me," answered she. "I that had flattered myself with bearing a son like thee, to have nothing but a paltry girl—out upon her—I will none of her."

Young Randolph, who, in the satisfaction of the moment, had been overlooked in his concealment, from whence, though he covered his body, his head was poked out, at the last words of Ambrosine, cried out,—"Give her to me, give her to me—I will have her myself, and love her dearly."

Laughing at the intruder, Monteith called him from his corner, and placing him, by the desire of Ambrosine, on the couch, he alternately admired and kissed the infant.

"Prophetic be thy words, Randolph!" said Ambrosine; "the ways of Heaven are not for men to discern; for who can say that hereafter, but this babe may give sons to the house of Roskelyn, and thus restore to its proper channel the rights of her father?"

"Thou art romantic, Ambrosine, and in thy affection for Randolph, forgettest the hated blood from whence he sprung."

"Monteith," replied she, "thou inheritest not the vice of thy parents, neither, I hope, will he."

Fearful of Ambrosine being too much disturbed, Bridget came to remove Randolph, whose cries at the separation resounded through the fortress.

A priest being fetched from Kismul, the young stranger received the name of Phillippa; and Ambrosine's health restored, she gained fresh charms in the eyes of her enraptured husband, as she nurtured the first pledge of their love at her truly maternal bosom.

Phillippa had not completed her second year, before Ambrosine gave birth to a son, which, while it claimed an equal right to the affection of his parents with the first-born, appeared to possess no superiority; not only Phillippa, but Randolph, maintaining their place in the affection of Monteith and Ambrosine.

For four years after the birth of Monteith's son, all remained so quiet at Barra, that the residents could almost have forgotten they were outlaws; plenty flourished around them, which with open hands they shared with all.

The agent of Ambrosine regularly remitted her revenues, which, together with those of Ross, Hamilton, and M'Gregor, all of which Sir Alexander collected, amply supplied them.

Though peace reigned at the island, it was more enforced by the increased commotions that distracted the kingdom, than from any good will towards the outlaws. The discontents between the king and his nobles daily strengthened; fearful therefore of kindling a flame in the islands, which he might find it difficult to extinguish, he, by the advice of the more prudent of his council, resolved to take no further cognizance of the outlaws, leaving them for the present, in inoffensive and peaceful security.

CHAPTER XVIII.

About seven years after the attack upon the outlaws, they were visited by Sir Alexander M'Gregor, who informed them that King James had been assassinated at Perth, and that Archibald, Earl of Douglas, had been appointed regent—the young king being only seven years of age.

Sir Alexander tarried but a few days at the fortress, being anxious to learn how all would be arranged for the new government. He promised, however, to see them soon again, or, at least, to send them intelligence if any thing very material occurred.

No transaction of any consequence took place in the state of Scotland for near a year, when the Earl of Douglas died, and Sir Alexander Livingstone was appointed to succeed in the government of the kingdom, and to have the executive power, while William Crichton was chosen chancellor, and consequently had the direction of the civil courts. The division of power was productive of the most unpleasant consequences, as the governor and chancellor were at perpetual variance, so that, for a time, there was no appearance of either law or government throughout the country, the most atrocious acts being committed with impunity, and the kingdom one continued scene of confusion and bloodshed.

Monteith and his friends felt no inclination to take the part of either faction; power was the aim of each; and they resolved to leave to the heads of the respective parties the struggle to obtain it.

Thus resolved, and cut off from the noise and tumult by their situation, the instruction of the children became the business and amusement of the whole party. Randolph improved rapidly, not only in learning, but in the accomplishments befitting his rank, and the manly exercises which might hereafter be requisite to him. Phillippa, four years younger, was the immediate care of her mother, and promised in the bud, the same personal beauty and character. James Monteith had also begun his studies; and Ambrosine nurtured at her breast a second son, named St Clair, after his father.

Thus they were situated for six years, during which period the news had reached them that the queen had wedded Sir James Stuart, and with it a piece of intelligence still more interesting. The Knight of Lorn, as one of the first instances of the power he had gained by the marriage, had so nobly exerted himself for Monteith, that he procured from Sir Alexander Livingstone a reversal of the decree that confiscated his estates to the use of the Lord of Roskelyn; but the outlawry still remained, as Livingstone feared, in a time of such universal tumult, the additional weight such a man might give to any party he chose to espouse.

Ambrosine, as she saw the satisfaction Monteith received from his estates being restored, was likewise highly gratified, though she did not scruple to avow the pleasure it gave her, that the law offered him a sufficient reason for continuing on that land free from danger.

The addition of Monteith's wealth gave him the power of increasing his benevolence, which now became more active than ever; and, about two years after the recovery of his fortune, a storm having done considerable damage among the isles, particularly at Benbecula, the chief, accompanied by Ross, repaired thither to see what assistance could be given to the inhabitants.

The charitable errand performed, they were expected to return in a few days; but the given time having elapsed without their arrival, some anxious fears began to take possession of Ambrosine and the party left behind. Time strengthened this uneasiness; and William was despatched with a vessel to Benbecula, with orders to touch at the neighbouring islands if no intelligence was there obtained of Monteith and Ross. In the meantime, Ambrosine's fears were too great to be concealed; she

buried herself in the solitude of her chamber, without other companions but Bridget, Randolph, and her children.

The return of William confirmed their fears. He brought no tidings except that, after a stay of two days at Benbecula, Monteith and Sir James Ross left the island in the vessel that brought them, attended by the same two men who navigated it thither; but they had touched at no other of the islands: nor had the islanders seen any vessel during the period, save one under Danish colours, which for some days had hovered about the opposite coast.

In a consultation that took place between Hamilton, De Bourg, M'Gregor, and other companions, on the subject, their opinions were various, though the most prevalent was that Monteith had perished; the long interval of quiet he had enjoyed from his enemies banishing all suspicion concerning them.

Randolph, who, from the company of informed men, and the pains taken in his education, was more reflective than most lads of his age (now seventeen), was admitted to the consultation, and, with a firmness that astonished the whole party, held the opinion he had advanced to to Ambrosine—that Monteith had not perished.

"Are my dear father's enemies dead?" said he; "if they are not, the recovery of his property has stimulated them to revenge. "Oh God!" exclaimed he, with vehemence, "perhaps they may have beguiled and slain him; if so, young as I am—I pray you jeer not at my youth—I devote my life to avenge him. But who can speak comfort to the wounded heart of my mother, or who train the youth of my brothers to be worthy their father?"

"We devote ourselves to that duty," exclaimed, in one voice, M'Gregor, Hamilton, and De Bourg; "never shall they, during our lives, want the attention of a parent."

"I thank you, and am satisfied; ye have dispelled a mist from my mind."

"And thou hast raised one in mine," said De Bourg, who had been apparently lost in thought. "Though I think it very improbable that Monteith should have fallen into the power of his enemies, yet it is possible; and, by Heaven, I will spare no pains to discover it. I will away to Scotland and be satisfied."

"Now, if you think so," said M'Gregor, "we will all go."

"Not so; too many would but mar my purpose. Hamilton and you remain here, that, if we find it necessary, ye may collect our force. Some one else will volunteer to accompany me."

Before any one could reply, De Bourg having scarcely concluded, Randolph exclaimed—

"I pray, if ye love me, let me go; whose right is so near as mine?"

"My good lad, there are many objections against thy going," said Hamilton.

Randolph looked distressed.

"Ye fear me because I am yet a boy," replied he; "but, in this case, I trust I shall possess the courage of a man."

"I do not doubt it; but a motive of consequence requires thee to remain at Barra."

"Can any motive be stronger than the duty of a son to a father?" replied Randolph.

"Perhaps not: but that very duty must restrain thee."

A stroke on the chamber-door brôke off the discourse. On being opened, Ambrosine entered, leaning on her daughter Phillippa. For some days she had declined seeing even the residents of the fortress, who were shocked at the alteration that grief had made in her appearance. Her face was pale, her eyes sunken, her form bent; and her whole frame denoted that, though she evidently struggled to keep her sorrow within the bounds of reason, it preyed upon her life, and must inevitably destroy her.

"My friends," said she, "more than fourteen happy years have I passed among ye; but the loss of Monteith hath, alas! broken the willing chain that held me at Barra. With my children I will away to Kintail, and devote the sorrowful remainder of my life to educating them befitting so brave and noble a father. Yet, as life is uncertain, I have written a testament; and to you, my friends, Hamilton, De Bourg, M'Gregor, and his brother, Sir Alexander, left the guardianship of my boys. For Phillippa, she is yet a more sacred trust; she will need the support and advice of a matron. Had ye wives, the choice would be at once fixed; but, as ye have not, select for her, in case of my death, such of your female relations as you deem most honourable, for, should disgrace assail, never will my spirit rest."

The sobs of Phillippa interrupted her mother, and the residents in vain endeavoured to conceal their emotion, while Randolph clasped his arms round the daughter of Monteith, and mingled his tears with hers.

"Children," at length resumed Ambrosine, "fie on this weakness! I shall not die the sooner for expressing my wishes. For you, Randolph, observe me well, and, as your soul shall answer at the great and final account, remember what I shall now request of you. You love Phillippa better than either James or St Clair; therefore, to your special affection I commend her. Advise her youth, and direct her steps to happiness; and should you ever meet a villain who thinks of her with dishonour, plunge a dagger into his heart."

Phillippa hung down her head, though unconscious of the purport of her mother's words.

"James and St Clair," continued Ambrosine, "will also need your friendship. Withhold it not: so shall ye sit with honour in the seat of your fathers."

"Dear mother," replied Randolph, "think not that I love not James and St Clair. By my life, I do most truly; but Phillippa is my only sister, and I loved her so well before they were born, that my heart had scarcely any affection left to bestow; and, by my soul's hope of everlasting peace, never will I enjoy happiness that she doth not share."

"My much esteemed lady," said De Bourg, "though you have spoken thus solemnly, I trust there are many happy years in store for you."

Ambrosine raised her eyes in anguish.

"Happiness," replied she, "is torn from me for ever. The first fair wind I will away to Kintail. Remember me, as I will ye all as my best friends. To your care I leave my dear Randolph, who, I trust, will prove worthy your love."

"What have I done, that you banish me from your presence? 'Tis not my fault that I am not your child. Not even Phillippa loves you better than I do."

"Do not increase my emotion, Randolph; my heart needs no additional pang. Necessity compels me to act thus, as thou mayest sometime hence know; but, while life remains, thou wilt find me with arms open to receive thee, and a heart ready to return thy affection."

Two days after, Ambrosine and her children, attended by Bridget and William, left the island. The separation was painful to all, particularly to Randolph, who in vain struggled to conceal his emotion; and, having accompanied them on board, on his return climbed an eminence, in order to watch the vessel while she remained in sight.

CHAPTER XIX.

The departure of Ambrosine appeared to renew the loss of Monteith to the inhabitants of the fortress. De Bourg, selecting a single companion, named Frazer, resolved to depart on the morrow. To elude suspicion, he blackened his hair and brows, which were naturally fair, and assumed the dress of a common Highlandman, as also did his companion. Randolph, who found it vain to entreat to accompany him, had ceased to do so, though he particularly attended to their intentions and destination.

His character, hitherto open, appeared, for some days after the departure of De Bourg, to become reserved. He remained much alone, and lost the glow of high health that used to bloom on his cheeks. He, however, made no complaint; and Hamilton and M'Gregor, attributing the change to the loss of Ambrosine and her children, paid no attention, as they concluded that time alone would remove his uneasiness. The restraint laid upon him was in reality the cause of the alteration they perceived. It continually preyed upon his fancy, and bewildered his thoughts, to conjecture the reason of his being detained. "A motive of consequence detains me at Barra, says De Bourg. Strong indeed must that motive be, when it takes place of the affection and duty of a son. Had they condescended to disclose it, it might have restrained me; but now it is repugnant to nature, which calls upon me to seek my father, whom I cannot think has perished at sea. The house of Roskelyn, and the old court of Scotland, well I know are his enemies; but where or how the enmity arose I know not, though I have no dispute of the injustice done my father, who himself possesses the soul of honour."

Such, in part, were the reflections of Randolph, who resolved to escape from the island, and seek Monteith, even in the dwelling of his enemies. He had indistinctly heard at times of the disguises assumed by St Clair and his companions, and resolved to have recourse to the same expedient, by concealing himself under a feigned character, to gain, if possible, the intelligence he wished.

Unsuspected by the residents of the fortress, he, in less than a week, found an opportunity to put his design into execution; for, a small vessel lying off the coast, he rose one morning early, and going on board, sailed with the fishermen to the port of Ardnamurchan. The flight of Randolph was not discovered for some hours, but once known, caused universal confusion. The clothes he wore were all he had taken; and though they surmised he had some few demis of gold in his pocket, as he was always liberally supplied, yet they knew they could not be many,

and must soon be expended in a country to which he was an entire stranger. That he would take the way to Edinburgh or Roskelyn, to join De Bourg, they had no doubt, but felt the improbability of his performing such a journey so ill provided. His flight, too, broke up all the schemes they had formed; for, should he be discovered, they could only reap disgrace instead of the advantage they had promised themselves from detaining him; an advantage, however, much lessened by the loss of Monteith. After mature consideration, one of the inmates of the fortress went in pursuit of the runaway, with a commission to pass, first into Inverness-shire, and take the counsel of Sir Alexander M'Gregor on the subject.

In the interval of confusion at Barra, De Bourg and his companion had reached the city of Edinburgh. The contentions of party yet ran high, and intestine broils, unchecked by the minority of the king, still disgraced and deluged the land with blood. De Bourg hastened to Roskelyn, and, taking up his abode in a cottage, soon gained an opportunity to see Ralph, the father of William.

The chevalier, after relating the loss of Monteith, declared the suspicions he entertained, that he had fallen into the power of his enemies, and pressed Ralph, by all he held sacred, to inform him whether, by any word or action that might have dropped from the family of Roskelyn, he could judge if these suspicions were well founded.

Ralph heard him with visible emotion, but declared his firm belief of their innocence.

"The Lord Roskelyn," said he, "is now here, and so also are the dowager, and the young Lord and Lady Matilda, her grandchildren. As for the countess, she is at the old castle at Upper Lorn, which she inherited from her father. To say the truth, I am old, or, by the holy Virgin! this castle should be no service for me; for we have such turmoils and disputes as render it, even to the vassals, a hell upon earth."

"What disputes?" said De Bourg. "I thought the Lord Roskelyn kept out of all party contentions."

"In faith, good sir, he has had too many contentions at home to need any abroad: and, for the last twelve years, they have increased so rapidly that at length the castle would no longer hold them. The noble Monteith has had a blessed escape, and my lord is severely punished for his share of the treachery, for if ever fiend dwelt in a woman's form, it is in that of the countess."

"Would you infer," said De Bourg, "that family contentions are the cause of Lady Roskelyn's absence?"

"In faith are they. She hath neither the duty of a wife nor the affection of a mother. In consequence of a quarrel that took place some four months since, she quitted the castle, leaving her children, the Lord John and the Lady Matilda, with their father."

"How fares the dowager in this confusion?"

"Age comes upon her apace, and the sins of her youth intrude upon her fancy; she hath, therefore, endowed two chapels, the one to St Magdalen, the other to the Virgin."

"Marry, she doth well," replied De Bourg, "to procure friends for the time to come, for surely she will need them at the final account."

Ralph then informed the chevalier that the earl had not left Roskelyn for the last eight months; adding that if an event of such consequence

as seizing Monteith had been designed, or had taken place, some action or word must have transpired to disclose it.

De Bourg acquiesced in the justice of the observation with a sigh, and, shaking the old man by the hand, informed him that the following day he should depart, but that, previous to his return to the island, he should visit Kintail, as he much feared the wife of Monteith would not long survive her loss.

Randolph, on leaving Barra, had resolved to pursue the steps of De Bourg; he well knew the chevalier was too good-humoured, and too sincerely his friend, to be long angry with him. After landing at Ardnamurchan, he resolved to enquire his way forward toward the capital—knowing that he then should be but a short distance from Roskelyn. Reaching the port in the afternoon, he proceeded but a few miles, when, finding a single cottage, he resolved to seek a lodging for the night, for, as far as his eye could stretch, he could discern no other dwelling, Striking against the door, a rough voice asked who was without.

"A stranger youth," replied Randolph, "who entreats food and lodgings for the night."

The door was opened by a man of middle age, of the largest size, rough in appearance, and clad in a coarse garb. He bade the youth enter, and viewing him attentively, after a pause, he bade him welcome. By the side of the fire sat an old woman, meanly clad, and whose meagre, harsh, and wrinkled exterior, gave to Randolph the first ill impression he received of age, which he ever before had viewed with particular reverence. She was preparing for the supper, but, on his entrance, reached a stool and placed it by the hearth.

The supper being placed upon the board put a stop to the questioning of the host and hostess, and, though served in the roughest fashion, its contents showed that want dwelt not among the inmates of the cottage.

Supper ended, M'Lellan, the host, produced a keg of spirits, of which in vain he pressed his young guest to partake.

"I thank ye," said Randolph, "I like it not; my welcome hath already exceeded my expectation. Permit me to make what acknowledgment is in my power."

So saying, he drew a small bag from his pocket, and presented a demy to his hostess.

"Holy father," cried she, "I have no change for such a piece."

"I need it not," said Randolph; I must intrude upon you for a bed, and breakfast to-morrow."

"Right welcome, master," replied M'Lellan. "Know you the road you must take?"

"No; you will be kind enough to direct me."

"I will take you a few miles on your long journey."

"I thank you, and will now retire to rest."

"Do so; we will rise early. Mother," added he, addressing the old woman, "light young master to his chamber."

The dame obeyed, and Randolph retired to rest.

CHAPTER XX.

Though Randolph was early stirring, he found his host already risen and gone out. The old woman was preparing breakfast, and, in a short time, M'Lellan returned. The meal being ended, they departed, the host leading the youth over the mountains for the space of three miles; then, pointing out the road, he bade him farewell.

As Randolph pursued his way, the country was mountainous, dreary, and unpeopled; but, unaccustomed to villainy, he knew no fear. He had proceeded about two miles, when, from the hollow of one of the mountains, he saw two men approach. On meeting, one said—"Good day, young master. We are poor fellows: can you give us a little money to help us on our way?"

Though their appearance was by no means prepossessing, Randolph was too much unacquainted with the world to think they were robbers; he therefore replied—I possess but little, but a part I will willingly give you."

He drew his purse, and presented a small piece to the man. The first speaker says—

"In faith, a noble boy; but, master we must have more; this is not sufficient to supply our wants."

The manner of the robbers conveyed to the mind of Randolph an idea of the truth, and made him recollect that he had no arms, or if he had, that he was no match for two such muscular villains, who, he perceived, had both swords and dirks.

"You ask too much," replied he; "what I could spare I gave willingly; you must apply elsewhere for more."

"We will go no farther; so no delay," said one, drawing his dirk, and presenting it to his breast.

As the first spoke the other drew his sword, and repeated the demand in a yet more peremptory manner.

Randolph's anger was roused, and, with a spirit beyond his years, he snatched the dirk from the robber that held it to his breast, and taking a sudden aim, struck it through his right arm. His villainous accomplice immediately levelled a blow at the youth's head with his sword, and struck him to the ground, where he lay senseless. In all probability they would have slain and stripped him, had they not perceived on the hill above them some horsemen, who, they feared, might discover them; so hastening away with the purse, they left the youth bleeding on the ground.

The horsemen, who proved to be a company of merchants, though they had not seen the act, on reaching the spot, perceived the yet senseless boy; and, raising him, bound up the wound in his head, and placed him on one of their horses, which they led gently forward, looking for some dwelling where they might procure assistance. Winding round a mountain for about two miles, they at length reached a valley, at the extreme part of which stood an ancient castle, strong, but of no great extent; there, sounding the horn at the gate, they craved admittance for the wounded stranger.

The sight of the horsemen at the gate, and the report of a dying youth, assembled the domestics, who, however, were unanimous in refusing to

admit a stranger, until a young damsel, advancing, said—"Stay a moment, our mistress surely cannot shut the gates against such an unfortunate sufferer." So saying she hastened into the castle, and speedily returned, attending a lady, who, after questioning the merchants, ordered the youth to be admitted.

The merchants, satisfied with having procured him protection, departed; while Randolph, restored to recollection, heard with disgust the difficulty his humane preservers met with to gain him admittance; but, too weak to express resentment, he entered the dwelling, leaning on the friendly Jean, who had exerted herself in his favour, and one of the male domestics, who conducted him to a chamber.

Placing him on a couch, while the man dressed the wound in his head, Jean ran to fetch him a cup of wine; and, then, leaving him to his repose, they quitted the apartment.

For some days Randolph found himself unable to rise; during which time no attention on the part of the friendly Jean was wanting. At length, strong enough to leave his bed, he ardently longed to be able to pursue his way, fearful of missing the chevalier; but, destitute of money, he was puzzled to devise the means.

On resuming his clothes, which lay in the chamber, he was astonished to find beside them a dirk, which he had heard the merchants say was found by his side, and which he had no doubt was that with which he had struck the robber. "Glad as I should be of a weapon," said he, "I will none of this; the dirk of an assassin suits not the hand of the son of Monteith."

The dirk, at first almost unheeded by Randolph, suddenly, as he looked upon it, riveted his whole attention; an hundred times in his infancy, fixed in its sheath, had he played with it, too surely identified by the initials of Randolph M'Gregor, from whom it had reverted to Monteith, who constantly wore it in his girdle.

Grief, and the confusion of his thoughts, for some time made him incapable of forming any decisive opinion; at length, however, he resolved to keep the discovery he had made secret, and, instead of seeking the chevalier, to re-measure his steps, and hasten for counsel to Barra.

A thought struck him of going first to Kintail, where his affections most led him; but to bear such news to his mother, as he termed her, was impossible, and banished the idea as speedily as it arose.—"No," said he, "never may she know it, unless a revenge befitting the atrocity of the deed precede the recital!"

Lost in thought he was insensible of the entrance of the youthful Jean, who came to bring him refreshment. "Holy Mary!" exclaimed she, "are you worse? your looks frighten me. I have brought you food and wine; I pray you take some; it will revive you."

"I thank you, but cannot," returned Randolph; "I am sick at heart."

"Nay then," said she, "your fever is returned; your face is crimson; surely our lady is cruel not to call in some skilful leech to attend you; I will go and beg her to send for one."

"No, good Jean, I am in truth better; a sudden recollection crossed my mind and agitated my spirits."

"The vassals think you have eloped from the house of your father," said she; "if so, when you are recovered, you can return; they will forget their sorrow on seeing you safe."

"Alas; I have no father," said Randolph, bursting into tears.

"Dear youth, take not on thus heavily; neither have I a father, and my mother is far from me. Would I had never left her to follow the countess, whose ungracious temper makes me feel my loss every hour."

"I grieve at it; I judge you mean your mistress; I saw her on entering the castle. By what I can remember of her person, she was the fairest woman I ever saw, one excepted."

"She is, though past the bloom of youth; but, for all her beauty and her riches, I would rather be as I am, simple Jean Grant, than the Countess of Roskelyn, were I obliged to take her heart with her person."

Randolph started—"The Countess of Roskelyn!" repeated he; "is the Countess of Roskelyn the lady of this castle?"

"Yes, truly," replied Jean; "why do you express such wonder?"

"Wonder! no," answered Randolph, scarcely able to conceal his astonishment. "I have heard of the earl, but thought he dwelt near Edinburgh."

"And so he doth," replied she; "but some family difference made the countess leave the castle of Roskelyn."

"Is she here without friend or companion?" said Randolph. "If so, she will speedily return, I judge."

"She appears in no haste. The world says she was never partial to the Lord of Roskelyn, but, beguiled by grandeur, gave her hand without her heart."

"Hath she children?"

"Yes, two—the Lord John and the Lady Matilda. But I must away; I pray ye, let me see you take some food before I go."

"I cannot. Let me not detain you; I grieve to cause you such trouble, without a means of return."

"You are unkind to speak thus; I only vex my power is so small, and that you have not the benefit of better skill."

"I thank you, and can never forget but that for you I had, in all probability, lost my life; for, without your interference, I had never gained admittance."

"Name it not. Farewell; I will return as speedily as possible."

Randolph was not displeased to be left to himself. The discovery that he was in a dwelling belonging to his father's most implacable enemy, filled him with various reflections. Weak as he was, his first resolution had been to return immediately to the island; but now, on more mature reflection, he resolved to profit by his situation, and, if possible, remain a few days at the castle, in order to observe carefully all that passed.

In the meantime, the young Jean, caught by the graceful person of Randolph, was exerting all her influence with the countess. "I would," said she, "that you would condescend to question him."

"I have already more knaves than please me," replied the countess; "thinkest thou that I shall entertain another to please thee?"

"To please me? Heaven forefend! I wish no knaves, lady."

"Then learn silence. Is the lad ready to go hence?"

"No; he was this very day like to die."

"Whence comes he?"

"Beyond Inverness; an orphan, lady."

"For what goes he to Edinburgh?"

"He did not say; but, as I should guess, to procure employ; and truly he cannot long need it, for never did I see so noble a countenance."

"A goodly recommendation to a fool's heart; no wonder it found so easy a passport to thine."

"Doth beauty reach only fool's hearts, lady?" replied Jean.

Lady Roskelyn fixed her eyes on the damsel, who modestly cast hers down.

"You grow too flippant, wench," answered the lady, appropriating to herself the meaning of Jean's question. "When the boy is able, let me see him."

CHAPTER XXI.

JEAN hastened to Randolph's chamber, where she related the permission she had obtained; but far from appearing delighted at the favour, he seemed lost in thought, and in vain attempted to pretend a satisfaction he did not feel; for the more he reflected, the more the murder of Monteith overpowered every other consideration, and his answers were at once vague and abstracted from the purpose.

Jean looked at the food she had before brought, and found it untouched, and, with great persuasion, prevailed on him to drink a cup of wine. They then conversed together until the evening drew in, when her duty again called her to the countess.

Randolph's thoughts were so busy during the day, that he was scarcely sensible of the lapse of time.

Suddenly the sky became obscured. Torrents of rain poured down, universal darkness reigned around him, and the inhabitants of the castle were apparently buried in sleep. His chamber was even with an outward court, to which his window opened, and where he stood gazing at, or rather listening to the storm, when suddenly a gleam of light shone on the opposite side of the castle, and, a moment after, three men crossed the court. Randolph listened attentively, but they were silent, and the light of the torch which the one carried, flashing on the countenance of his companion, and rendering his features distinguishable, Randolph, to his infinite surprise, recognised his host, M'Lellan.

The hour, and the silence with which they passed, gave rise to unfavourable thoughts in Randolph's mind, and watching, he saw them pass an opening on the opposite side, where the beams of the torch were soon lost to sight.

In the morning, the youth waited with extreme impatience for the usual visit of Jean, who, however, did not appear until past the hour of noon.

Randolph first replied to her questions, then, with more adroitness, or rather art, than he had ever before used, he insensibly changed the discourse to his meeting the robbers, and to his previously passing the night at the cottage of M'Lellan.

"At the cottage of M'Lellan!" repeated Jean, with visible emotion; "are you sure it was there you slept the night before you met the robbers?"

"Yes; his mother called him by that name at supper. He is a muscular, hard-featured man. Do you know him?"

Jean looked cautiously around, and said—"That M'Lellan is a villain, I have no doubt, for I have frequently heard it whispered among the vassals; but I shall surprise you more when I tell you that he is very often here, and admitted to long conferences with the countess."

"But why should the vassals think him a villain, Jean?"

"Nay, I know not," replied she, hesitating; "but I should not wonder if he was concerned with the robbers who had so nearly murdered you."

Jean's observation had its full effect on the mind of Randolph. He recollected some circumstances which he thought justified her suspicions. If these suspicions were well founded, there was scarcely a doubt but that M'Lellan must have been a party in the murder of Monteith—a reflection which overpowered every other sentiment, and made him burst into tears. The sympathising heart caught the infection. She mingled her tears with his, and endeavoured to comfort him by saying that, even supposing M'Lellan to be concerned with the villains who robbed him, at least he was now safe within the walls of the castle, where, whatever might be M'Lellan's real character, he did not dare to show it.

"Alas! I think not of myself," replied he: "an object more dear to my heart engrosses all my thoughts."

He then informed her that, some weeks before, he had lost his father in so secret a manner that he resolved to go in search of him; that, in the dirk of the assassin, he instantly recognised the weapon worn by his parent—a proof too certain that the same villain had been concerned in his death.

Though Randolph was thus explicit, he neither told the name of his family nor whence he came, but concluded by conjuring her, if she knew aught of M'Lellan to corroborate his suspicions, that she would declare it.

"Promise, then," said she, "that you will never disclose what I shall unfold to you."

"Never, by my life—nay, by my soul! Therefore, dear Jean, speak."

"Be not so hasty. What I have to say cannot relate to you, though it will show the reason I have to think so ill of M'Lellan. About six weeks since, I happened to fix the robe of the countess not to her liking. She had, for more than a month before, been uncommonly harsh and peevish, and on this occasion struck me repeated blows. I had no refuge but tears, and at night could not sleep, but sat at the window, thinking of Roskelyn, and repining at my mother's folly, who, for the sake of gain, had placed me with the haughty countess. My chamber is not far distant from the portal, and, an hour before midnight, I heard a noise at the outward gate. The horn was sounded with violence, and the old porter arose, cursing the intruders in so loud a voice that I could distinctly hear him.

"The gate was at length unbarred, and a man entered, whom, by a torch which old Sandie held to his face, I recognised as M'Lellan, having seen him twice before in conference with the countess. Though it was the dead of night, he insisted on her being called, and was at length obeyed by the old porter beating at my chamber-door for that purpose, when, wrapping a plaid over my garments to conceal that I had not been undressed, I awoke the Lady Roskelyn, who instantly arose, and, scarcely taking time to put on sufficient raiment, hastened to the hall, where M'Lellan awaited her alone. On entering, she bade me begone, in an authoritative tone; but such was her impatience to enter on the

subject, that she said, ere I closed the door—'Is it done?' to which M'Lellan answered—'It is!' and I heard no more."

"Alas! alas!" exclaimed Randolph, in an agony of grief, "it was the murder of my father they spoke of."

"Not so," interrupted Jean. "What could the countess have to do with the murder of your father? Nay, compose yourself, or I will say no more."

Randolph, though agonized like one on the rack, prayed her to continue.

"I confess," resumed she, "that my curiosity was roused; and, stealing gently upstairs to the corridor that surrounds the top of the hall, I could see, though not hear, what passed. The countess presented a purse to M'Lellan, and soon after went to a massive chest that stands in a recess, from whence she took a bunch of large keys, which she also gave into his hands, and then he left her. For some time after his departure, she sat lost in thought, then hastily paced up and down the hall in visible agitation, until, fearing she might call for me suddenly, I went down and waited her commands. I might, however, have saved myself the trouble, for she retired no more that night."

"The weight of blood hung on her soul," said Randolph, "and will plunge it into everlasting perdition."

"No blood, I trust, was spilled; for on the following morning, at nearly the same hour, M'Lellan returned, and with him five men, guarding a man of noble deportment, but whose face I could not discern. He was brought through the court of the castle, and taken to the watch-tower, of which those were doubtless the keys that M'Lellan received from the countess the night before."

"Oh God! it is possible he may yet live!" exclaimed Randolph, in a transport of joy.

Jean looked astonished. "I should judge so, for a guard dwells still in the tower, and they would hardly lose their time in watching a dead body. But you are too soon depressed, and too soon elated; this stranger can be nothing to you."

"Perhaps not; but are you sure he is still here?"

"Most certain, though no one is admitted but M'Lellan and his crew."

At that moment Jean was loudly called for, when Randolph entreated her, for the love of Heaven, to be silent in respect of what had passed.

Randolph's heart was somewhat lightened. It was possible his father yet lived, if, in reality, he was the prisoner alluded to by Jean.

CHAPTER XXII.

In the meantime the countess, after bestowing on Jean every bitter invective her malicious mind could invent (she had called for her thrice, and her being found in Randolph's apartment furnished matter sufficient for reproach), commanded the stranger to be brought before her.

"Young man," said she, addressing him, "when I admitted you into my dwelling from motives of humanity, I did not expect you to appropriate the whole time of the silly damsel whom I employ in attending upon my own person."

"If I have offended, lady, I crave your pardon. Confined by the

wound I received, if at any time I have detained Jean in listening to my complaints, mine alone be the blame."

"What age are you?"

"Somewhat turned of seventeen."

"You are surely more."

"I would then, lady, that my experience and acquirements equalled my looks."

"What is your name, and of what family are you?"

Randolph, who had expected such questions, replied, though he blushed as he spoke—

"My name is Randolph: my family a younger branch of that of M'Gregor."

"Why have you left your home?"

"To seek preferment; the loss of my father made exertion necessary."

"To those who place you in the way to achieve your purpose, could you be a true and faithful lad?"

"Yes, provided I loved them."

"The merit would be less, then, if thou didst not. Could'st thou love me?"

"Considering only your face, lady, methinks I could worship you."

Lady Roskelyn's leading trait was vanity; the reply of Randolph, therefore, at once rendered her his friend.

"Well, then," replied she, "endeavour to regain thy health, and I will engage thee in my train."

"I thank you, lady."

Jean was delighted to have procured the protection of the countess for Randolph; nor was the youth himself displeased, as he had no doubt, that, if once admitted among the vassals of the house, he should find an opportunity to satisfy himself if it was really Monteith that was detained in the watchtower.

The vassals of the countess were too numerous for the addition of one comrade to cause either wonder or jealousy, and particularly as Randolph confined himself to his chamber until his wound should be completely healed.

Randolph's thoughts during this period, never wandered from his main design; he had watched two evenings, and at nearly the same hour seen men cross the court, and whom he now conjectured to be designed to relieve the guard kept upon the prisoner. Resolved to be certain, he, on the third night, followed them, concealing himself occasionally behind the buttresses of the castle. He found his conjectures confirmed; for the three men having entered the watchtower, the same number came out soon after, bearing a torch. Randolph again recognised among them M'Lellan.

The youth's disposition was naturally hasty and passionate; and he suffered severely from the constraint he was obliged to put on, by concealing himself at such a moment; but prudence, not only on his own account, but on that of Monteith, required it; and he suffered the villains to pass without notice.

Randolph walked round the tower, but no light was discernible except in the lower apartment, where the youth conjectured the guard was placed; and climbing up to the grated windows, found his supposition verified, for, before a blazing fire on the hearth, sat the three men whom

he had seen enter, and, on a table, their broadswords unsheathed, and a jug of wine, of which they apparently drunk so freely, that their snoring assured him there was no danger of his being discovered.

Descending from the window, he fixed his eyes on the higher chamber, and gave a loud whistle; but all was silent as death, and, fearful of creating an alarm, which could be productive of no real utility, he at length retired to his apartment.

The agitation of Randolph respecting the prisoner banished sleep from his eyelids, and, rising early, he resolved to walk round and examine every avenue to the castle. It had originally been strongly fortified; but time, and the little attention paid to it for some years, had caused it to fall to decay, so that he readily conjectured that, could the prisoner once be liberated, the means to complete his escape could not be difficult. Randolph's curiosity satisfied respecting the internal strength of the castle, he resolved to view the outside. Passing, therefore, the gates, he walked round the walls, and thence ascending the mountain at the bottom of which he had been attacked, he sat himself down to revolve on the means to pursue. For some time, his head sunk on his breast, he remained lost in thought, when suddenly he was recalled to recollection by two horsemen in the beaten path some fathoms beneath him, calling to ask whether there was any dwelling within a short distance, where they could procure refreshment for themselves and horses. Randolph started, raised his eyes, and, regardless of the space between himself and the travellers, with the agility of a mountain-deer, at once glided down the steep, with an emotion that neither left him the power to think nor to speak.

"Is it possible? can I believe my sight? Randolph! How camest thou hither?" exclaimed one of the strangers in astonishment, leaping from his horse.

"Blessed, blessed chance!" cried Randolph in a transport, seizing his hand. "Dear De Bourg, Heaven has surely sent you."

De Bourg and his companion, leaving their horses to graze, took their places by the youth, who related all that had befallen him since he left the island.

De Bourg was well pleased to find that no discovery respecting the birth of Randolph had taken place; and yet more so, that there was a probability that Monteith survived, though he was by no means so sanguine as the youth.

"However," observed he, "'tis clear that there is a prisoner, and, from the known disposition of the countess, no doubt, one unjustly oppressed. We will, therefore, at all events, set him free: the chance of its being St Clair is well worth the attempt. But now, my dear boy, let us mingle prudence with our joy; your absence may cause suspicion; return and be carefully observant of all that passes; we will, in the meantime examine all the outworks of the castle for some place to enter, for we are not strong enough to use open force, therefore must have recourse to art."

"When shall I see you again?" asked Randolph.

"To-morrow morn at the same hour; no material event can, in the meantime, take place without our knowledge, for thou wilt watch within, and I without."

Before they separated, De Bourg, taking his purse, gave it to Randolph, lest he might require money to aid in their plans.

Little more passed ere they parted; Randolph returning with a light step to the castle, while De Bourg and his companion conversed more fully on the discovery he had made.

CHAPTER XXIII.

RANDOLPH, again left to himself, waited for the night with impatience; but all attempts at discovery were fruitless, and after passing many sleepless hours, he hastened to his appointment.

De Bourg and his companion were already there. They informed him they had carefully examined the outer walls of the castle, and, at no great distance from the tower, had discovered a part fallen to decay, where they could easily enter, and wait for him at the turn of midnight. All arranged, they departed; and, as before, Randolph returned unnoticed, or at least disregarded.

In the course of the day, Jean having, by some means, incurred the displeasure of her arrogant mistress, Randolph was witness to a scene of violence and passion of which he could before form no idea.

A thought then struck him that, if he was successful, with the assistance of De Bourg, in liberating the prisoner, on his flight being discovered, the anger of the countess would entirely fall upon Jean. He therefore enclosed half the money he had received from De Bourg, in a packet, and in the evening gave it to her to keep, with the request that she would not open it till the morrow.

The appointed hour of midnight at length arrived. In silence and darkness Randolph watched from his chamber, and as usual, saw the guards, as he judged them, pass the court, and among them M'Lellan. Waiting a few minutes, until he supposed they had reached the tower, he left his apartment and followed.

The tower was at a considerable distance from the inhabited part of the castle, and Randolph had nearly reached the half-way, when to his infinite vexation, he came suddenly on one of the relieved guards, who was retiring to rest for the night. The man carried a torch, by the light of which Randolph, with amazement, recognised the features of the assassin who had wounded him previous to his being admitted into the castle. The villain first recovered his surprise.

"Boy," said he arrogantly, "what doest here at this hour? the countess shall know of thy midnight walks."

"What doest thou here, villain?" replied Randolph, thrown off his guard by passion; the countess shall to-morrow also know that her roof affords shelter to an assassin."

"Ah, ha! say you so," replied he, throwing down his torch which flamed upon the ground, and drawing his sword, made a stroke at Randolph, who, springing aside, avoided the blow, and, before the villain could again raise his weapon, rushed upon him, and plunged his dirk into his bosom, saying as he gave the stroke—"Have at thee, thou false knave; 'tis the dagger of Monteith, and his son sheathes it in thy murderous heart."

The assassin immediately fell to the earth.

Though prudence might have instigated Randolph to repeat the blow, his heart recoiled at the thought; trampling, therefore, on the torch, to

prevent its leading to a discovery, he took the weapon of his fallen enemy, and repaired to the aperture where De Bourg and his companion Frazer were to await him. They were already there. The emotion of the youth was not lost upon them. In a few words he told them the cause, which they felt redoubled the danger of delay. Hastening forward, Randolph, as they had previously devised, struck upon the door of the tower, while De Bourg and his companion stood behind the portal, M'Lellan from within, demanded who came so late, and their business.

"Have you forgotten my voice?" answered Randolph. "My business is respecting the prisoner. Know ye not that I am now in the service of the countess? Open the door."

"Marry, a young knave in office," muttered M'Lellan to his companions, in a low voice.

"Since I have known he was in this castle," replied one of his companions, "my mind hath plaguily misgiven me. I would Barnaby had struck surer the first day we met."

"Pish! there is no danger; he is always in our power. I am convinced he hath no suspicion."

"Will you admit me, or am I to return again to the countess?" said Randolph, again striking the door.

"A curse upon him! But I shall let him know I am as great a man as himself in the castle, and so he may tell his mistress," said M'Lellan.

As he spoke, he unbarred the gate; but, before he could either express his power or his displeasure, Randolph, followed by De Bourg and Frazer, rushed in, and hastily closed the door. Though the villains were taken by surprise, they attacked the intruders with a spirit befitting a better cause; but in so small a chamber as that of the entrance of the tower, which was no more than eight feet square, the conflict was soon decided. M'Lellan fell; and one of his comrades being disabled in the arm, the third sued for mercy. De Bourg, demanding the keys, they left Frazer to guard below, and commanded the man who had received the least injury to lead to the apartment of the prisoner.

The fellow, entirely subdued, preceded them in sullen silence. On reaching the second storey, where the prisoner was confined, Randolph had no longer patience, but, snatching the keys, himself opened the door.

The door unlocked and unbolted, they entered. The prisoner had heard the conflict, and, far from suspecting the real cause, conjectured that the business for which he was detained was now to be completed, and prepared to meet his fate with fortitude. Advancing, therefore, to meet them—"Agents of hell," said he, "I am ready; set me free from this thraldom, but be assured, a day of retribution will come, when ye will surely repay the blood of Monteith."

"Monteith! father!" exclaimed Randolph, rushing into the chamber, and with frantic energy, clasping St Clair's neck.

"Gracious powers, Randolph; is it possible? De Bourg, too! and no more! Is this real, or is it the wandering of my sickly fancy?"

"Dear St Clair," replied De Bourg, "thanks be to Heaven, 'tis true substantial happiness. An hour since, I would have given my life to have realized this scene, which we owe to Randolph: but come—no time is to be lost; take this sword," presenting one he had taken from M'Lellan; "danger yet hangs over us, but we will clear it or die; Monteith is now our leader, and fear cannot assail us."

St Clair, weakened with sorrow and suffering, leaned for a moment on the sword—"Say," answered he, "but that Ambrosine lives, and again shalt you see Monteith himself; if she is lost, I can die here—there is no need of going farther."

"No, surely, not for a man who loves only himself," replied De Bourg; "but for one who considers what his friends have ventured in his cause he will repay the debt to the uttermost. Ambrosine, a short time since, though plunged in grief for thy supposed death, survived."

"Survived!" repeated St Clair; "how cold the word! but lead on—though enervated, I can still follow the call of honour."

St Clair grasped the weapon, and followed De Bourg. They found M'Lellan dead, and his comrade, though faint with the loss of blood, seated on a bench in the act of binding up his wound.

After securing the door of the tower on the outside, they hastened to the breach in the castle-wall; which passing, they found four horses, that De Bourg had provided, and fastened in an adjacent thicket; these they instantly mounted, and departed full speed.

"By my life," said St Clair as they rode forward, "I cannot even yet think myself awake; rescued so suddenly, and by so small a force, almost exceeds belief; tell me, know ye aught of Ross? is he returned to Barra?"

"Not when we left the island," replied De Bourg, "which is some weeks since. Thou lightenest my heart by the supposition that he still lives."

"Heaven forefend that he should not! But tell me truly, how doth my wife—my children?"

"Thy wife and children were overwhelmed with sorrow when I last saw them; thy return, will, I hope, banish their grief. Ambrosine hath left Barra and retired to Kintail; and thus doubly have we felt thy loss."

"Let us away thither; the first moment of liberty be hers—the next is due and shall be paid at Barra."

"Thinkest thou there is no danger of a pursuit from the house of Roskelyn? If thou dost, tempt it not, but retire to the island; I will be the joyful messenger to Kintail."

"There is no fear, De Bourg; thy friend St Clair, who laughed at the attacks of men, hath been beguiled, disgraced, and foiled, by the art of a woman."

Using the utmost diligence until the morning was far advanced, they reached the dwelling of a peasant, where they procured refreshment for themselves and horses; during which interval, De Bourg related all that had passed at Barra—the common distress for the loss of himself and Ross—his own journey to Edinburgh—flight of Randolph and its subsequent consequences, which had terminated so happily; softening only the distressed state of Ambrosine.

"My dear boy," said Monteith, "thou hast already realized what my fondest hopes wished to see accomplished, and I scarcely regret a misfortune which has at once proved thy affection and thy valour."

Their beasts recruited, and themselves refreshed with such food as the cottage afforded, they resumed their journey, and travelling all day and the ensuing night, before noon on the second day they reached the neighbourhood of Kintail, where De Bourg, and also Randolph, trembling for the life of Ambrosine, entreated Monteith not to surprise her by his

presence hastily, but to suffer them to break the first intelligence, in some manner less hazardous to her agonized feelings.

"Act as thou thinkest best," said St Clair, "but remember my impatience."

De Bourg assured him he would not forget it; and, speeding forward, they reached the avenues of the castle of Kintail, where Monteith and Frazer promised to remain, while De Bourg and Randolph went on to the mansion, to apprise Ambrosine of the welcome tidings.

CHAPTER XXIV.

When they reached the gate, they were met by the old steward. Declaring to him their business was with the Lady Kintail, his eyes filled with tears, and viewing them with a look of sorrow, he said—

"Alas! you cannot see her; she hath no longer any earthly business."

"Dead!" exclaimed De Bourg, turning pale, while Randolph, equally alarmed, leaned against the portal for support."

"No," replied the old man, "not dead, but beyond all hope; life only lingers like the flame of a lamp whose oil is exhausted. Calm and resigned, no complaint escapes her; but if, perchance, weary nature finds a short respite in sleep, she then calls upon her dead lord, and by her words, refers to the love she bore him living."

"Good old man, I pray you call Bridget, tell her 'tis De Bourg and Randolph that crave to see her."

The steward obeyd. At sight of the chevalier and Randolph, Bridget wept and wrung her hands; but somewhat recovered, she informed them that the wife of Monteith was already advised of the chevalier's journey to Edinburgh, and the subsequent flight of Randolph, by Sir Alexander M'Gregor, and the messenger who had been sent from Barra; that both had tarried some days at Kintail, from whence they had returned to the island, much dispirited by the hopeless situation of the heiress, and uncertainty respecting the chevalier and Randolph.

Scarcely attending to what she told them, they desired to be admitted to see the wife of Monteith, and being announced, proceeded to her apartment.

On entering the apartment, they started back. On a couch, supported, was the still lovely Ambrosine, her eyes sunken, her lips livid, and her alabaster skin alone covering the beautiful symmetry of form and feature, that mortal decay could only destroy; on one side knelt Phillippa, on the other James, and at her feet sat the young St Clair.

"My dear friends," said she, "how kind ye are to come at this distressful hour! my heart ardently longed to be thus satisfied; the most anxious fears have distressed me on your account."

Without speaking, Randolph threw himself by Phillippa, and, weeping, concealed his face on the couch, while De Bourg, taking the hand of Ambrosine, was for some time equally unable to reply.

"The generous motive that directed your journey, De Bourg," continued she, "and the filial one that prompted your flight, my dear Randolph, have made an impression on my heart, to be effaced only by death; but alas! I am too well aware of the inefficacy of your search, to feel the least disappointment at your want of success."

"Dear lady, take comfort; all hope is not lost."

"No," answered she, smiling, "we shall meet again; I shall myself find Monteith, the husband of my love, the man alone for whom I wished to live. You speak not, Randolph," added she, after a pause; "dear boy, come near; take my blessing and my thanks, for the affection that prompted you to seek Monteith."

Randolph raised her hand to his lips—"Beloved mother," replied he, in broken accents, "it was Heaven that prompted me to seek my father."

"It was, my son; for an affectionate and grateful heart is the gift of God."

Pleasurable as were the tidings of De Bourg and Randolph, they feared to disclose them.

"Lady," at length said De Bourg, "we owe Randolph a debt we can never repay; his search hath been more fortunate than mine, for he hath found—"

Ambrosine started, and hastily interrupting the chevalier, she said—"Speak, I conjure you; hath he discovered the body of St Clair? have the waves yielded him up to my prayer? if so, our dust shall mingle; and, at the great day, when the grave shall open and disgorge its dead, our spirits shall rise together."

As she spoke, her sunken eyes sparkled, and her fragile form appeared to gain strength from the idea.—"Oh! if indeed you have been so blest," added she, "once more let me see him."

"Lady," replied De Bourg, "this agitation will destroy you: Monteith lives."

"Lives!" exclaimed she, wildly gazing around her: Monteith lives! De Bourg is no liar; Monteith lives! Away with those hateful sables! Monteith lives! give me my wedding garments; I will away to meet him!" As she spoke, she made an effort to rise; but nature was too far exhausted, and she sank senseless on her pillow.

For some moments the utmost despair reigned; all thought her gone for ever; at length, slowly recovering, she apparently strove to collect herself.—"I am strangely weak," at length said she; "I dreamed that ye said Monteith still lived."

"Dear mother," answered Randolph, "your dream will be verified."

"Verified!" repeated she, fixing her eyes strongly upon him, with fearful earnestness; "verified, did you say? Observe me, Randolph—I have reached that moment when the world fades from the sight, and truth alone stands the test; answer me, therefore, as your soul shall answer its worldly transgressions, whether what you say is not merely to palliate the anguish of the moment?"

"No, by my hopes of happiness, by your life, and all I hold most dear, my father lives!"

"Your father!" replied Ambrosine, her imagination again wandering; "what is *your* father to me?"

"Dear lady, endeavour to collect yourself," said De Bourg; "by my soul and honour, my friend Monteith, your husband, lives."

"Oh, for a strong reviving potion," cried Ambrosine, "that would enable me to support life till we once more meet, that I might yield my breath in his arms!"

"Be the consequence what it may, Monteith shall instantly be ad-

mitted," said the chevalier; should she expire without seeing him, never should I pardon myself for this delay; stay then here, Randolph, I will return with him immediately."

For some minutes after the departure of De Bourg, Ambrosine lay with every semblance of death; at length reviving, she looked round, and asked for the chevalier.

"He is gone on a welcome errand," said Randolph; "bear up, dear mother—he will speedily return."

"You have not then deceived me," said she: "Monteith is indeed among the living! Fie on this weakness! methought my heart had forgotten to beat, yet now my bosom will scarcely contain it."

In the mean time, De Bourg had joined Monteith and his companion; his features were too indicative of grief, for St Clair to hazard a question, and, judging the worst, he leaned against a tree in silent expectation.

"Monteith," said De Bourg, "come on; no time is to be lost; prepare for a sight that will rend your heart; but conceal your anguish as much as possible in her presence, for the balance of life and death are so exactly poised, that a hair would turn the scale."

"I will, my friend," replied Monteith, in a smothered voice, and with forced composure.

A melancholy silence followed, which neither seemed inclined to interrupt, while they passed to the castle.

When the chevalier was again admitted to the lady's chamber, he found her more composed, and supported by Randolph, in eager but silent expectation. On his entrance, her strained sight appeared to look beyond him, while clasping her hands with impatience, she cried—"He comes not; barbarous deception! am I so sunk in your opinion, that you treat me like a wayward child? Oh Monteith! Monteith! didst thou indeed live, who would dare to deceive me thus?"

"Life of my life, and dearer to my soul than the light of day, or the blood that warms my heart, thy husband is here," said Monteith, entering the chamber, but starting back at sight of her altered form, and stopping motionless at the foot of her couch. The name of St Clair escaped her lips; she stretched forth her hands, and made an effort to rise, but sunk senseless into his arms.

Monteith at first thought her dead, and gave way to the anguish of his heart, while in vain Bridget and De Bourg entreated him to retire.

"Never," exclaimed he, with vehemence; "we will never separate. Oh, my love! my wife! may the fiend that caused thy sufferings, be accursed! I could forgive all but this"

Ambrosine slowly revived; all remained silent; and, as a mother watches the first-born of her hopes, so did Monteith hang over his idolised Ambrosine, fearful to breathe, lest his words should dissolve the flattering wish of once more hearing her speak.

"It is then indeed true that thou art restored to me," she at length said, "and thou wilt not again forsake me?"

St Clair supported her in his arms, her cheek reclined on his bosom, and her eyes fixed on his face. Though Ambrosine was so much exhausted, she appeared serene and composed; and all leaving the chamber except Monteith, Phillippa, and Bridget, she, still leaning on his bosom, dropped insensibly asleep.

On awakening, her spirits appeared more collected, and she took food; but her extreme weakness left scarcely any hope of her recovery.

De Bourg, willing to share his satisfaction with his friends, resolved to depart immediately for the island; but Frazer requesting that commission, the chevalier remained at Kintail.

CHAPTER XXV.

The health of Ambrosine for many days remained in so precarious a state that the fears of her friends suffered no abatement. Monteith never quitted her, and the rough warrior was lost in the tender, careful, and affectionate husband. Whatever his hand presented, however repugnant to her inclinations, she received: and, viewing his anxious gaze when she declined the food or cordial offered her, she struggled to swallow them even when her heart recoiled. She spoke but little, but her anxiety for Monteith was visible in every action. If she slept, his hand was clasped in hers—his garment wound about her arm, or her hand reclined on his bosom, as if to ascertain his presence. Thus, by almost insensible degrees, her strength began to renovate, and hope to revive in the bosom of her friends. The first subject on which she expressed her wishes was, that St Clair should return to Barra, where he would be safe from the machinations of his enemies; but this he peremptorily refused. "I have nothing to fear from the State," replied he; "and it is not the power of the house of Roskelyn that can injure me, surrounded by your vassals, and so near the friendly islanders."

Ambrosine pressed the subject no farther, but was daily wishing for strength to return to the fortress. "I should there," said she, "be speedily restored. The voyage would be most salutary to me. Nor will my mind be satisfied till I once more enjoy the life which the society of so many years endeared to me."

Her strength at length permitting her to leave her couch, Monteith would often bear her in his arms to a terrace of the castle which fronted the sea, and where the breezes, congenial to her constitution, daily appeared to renovate the faded roses of her cheeks. Able to walk, leaning on her husband or her children, no persuasion could divert her from the desire of returning to Barra; and some few days more being given for preparation, a vessel was provided, in which they embarked, attended by Bridget and some few domestics.

However attentive Monteith had been to his wife, the situation of Sir James Ross had employed many of his hours; and previous to his departure to Barra, consulting with De Bourg and Randolph, they agreed to engage a vessel to convey the two latter to Denmark, in search of Sir James.

Elated with their former success, De Bourg and Randolph departed in high spirits, well furnished with money, and attended by William and twelve islanders, on whose courage and fidelity they could rely.

The return of the family of Monteith to Barra caused the utmost joy. The arrival of Frazer with the welcome news of Monteith's safety, had delayed the departure of Sir Alexander M'Gregor, who now shared in the general satisfaction. This pleasure was still increased by the end of ten days, by the arrival of the vessel which had taken De Bourg and Ran-

dolph in search of Sir James, and which now brought him with them, to share the common joy.

All were too happy to enter into long explanations, Ross simply informing him that, on being separated from Monteith, he was taken to Elsineur, where he was liberated, and left without money. After a stay of six weeks, he prevailed on the captain of a trading vessel, bound to Scotland, to take him on board; and, touching at the Orkneys in their way, to his surprise and satisfaction, he encountered De Bourg and Randolph, who came aboard to make enquiries respecting him, when, having fulfilled his engagements to the captain, he joined them and returned.

The rejoicing having somewhat subsided, and the usual tranquillity being restored, Randolph, one evening, as the family were sitting in social converse, addressing Monteith, said—"My dear father, that you were betrayed into the power of the house of Roskelyn, I well know; but the particulars I am yet to be informed of. May I beg that sometime you will favour us with the relation?"

"Willingly, my dear boy; but before I enter into the recent injuries I have received, it will be necessary to give thee a yet longer account of the injuries of that family. Thou knowest me only, Randolph, as the outlaw St Clair. My history must elucidate the subject, and make thee a judge between the house of Roskelyn and myself. Let no prejudice in my favour influence thee, but consider the subject as if I were John of Roskelyn, and he Monteith."

"I shall be vexed," said Randolph, "if my curiosity should make you recall former sorrow."

"Nay, Randolph, not so; thy conduct hath stamped thy claim to my everlasting gratitude as well as affection, and never will I forget it."

"The utmost wish of my heart, dear father, is to be worthy of you, and the partial friends that have formed me from infancy."

"I believe thee, and to-morrow will begin my tale. To-night it is too late; besides, events so long past need some recollection." The discourse then reverted to other subjects, and, after having passed the evening cheerfully, they all retired to rest.

CHAPTER XXVI.

RANDOLPH'S curiosity was excited. He wished to know the particulars of the enmity between the house of Roskelyn and Monteith—an enmity that no time appeared to lessen, and that, he well knew, was the cause of his father's banishment.

St Clair's family he had never heard mentioned, more than the name of his uncle Monteith, whom he ever spoke of with reverence and gratitude; but the name of his parents had never, to Randolph's recollection, escaped him—a circumstance which astonished him as much as the profound silence and secrecy that were ever held respecting his own mother.

After dinner the ensuing day, the whole party being assembled, St Clair said—

"I have not forgotten my promise. My story is well known to my companions, Ross, De Bourg, M'Gregor, and Hamilton, for I involved them in my misfortunes. Sir Alexander, and some few others of our

inmates, also know it; but the friendship that unites us requires that I should be equally communicative to all."

Thus premising his relation, he began as follows:—

"The earliest period of my life which my memory can trace with any precision, was at Toray, in the isle of Lewes, when I was about five years old, and called St Clair M'Crae. My father possessed a small portion of land, a comfortable cottage, and an excellent fishing vessel, in which he occasionally traded to the coast of Scotland, the Orkneys, and even to Norway. Though his manners were rough, he was in truth an honest man. My mother was of a higher caste. She had been serving-woman to a lady of the south, and the little my father possessed had been the reward of her attentions. An only child is usually humoured and spoiled by its mother. This, however, was not my case. I was, as she said, so very unlike everything she wished, so different from the delicate children she had been accustomed to, in the court and city, that she could not endure me. With my father I was more fortunate. He called me a sturdy dog, and his heart's pride; and before I had seen my seventh year, I had accompanied him to Norway, and repeatedly to the coast of Scotland. My character was naturally passionate, blunt, and fearless. If offended, I did not hesitate to strike those who were my superiors in age, so that I frequently got well drubbed; a circumstance which, however, far from affecting my courage, rather acted as an incentive to increase it. Inured to cold and hardship, I knew them only by name, for I was insensible of their effects. Active as the mountain-deer, the most inaccessible heights of the rocks and hills were familiar to me, so that, by the time I had reached my twelfth year, I became a kind of leader, if I may so call it, to the lads of Toray. This distinction was not only owing to my disposition, but perhaps to the situation of my parents, who were accounted more affluent than any in our vicinity.

"With a chosen few of my comrades, one of our favourite diversions was hunting; and being, from my first remembrance, particularly fond of my bow, I had become a tolerable marksman; added to which, being well acquainted with the haunts of the deer, we were frequently successful, though our good fortune was usually attained with considerable labour and fatigue. These successes had gained us some celebrity, and not a little flattered our vanity.

"Returning from a trading voyage on the coast of Inverness, where I accompanied my father, we brought from thence a noble passenger, no other than the gallant chief Monteith. He had been a soldier of the cross in the Holy Land, and, newly returned after an absence of several years, visited his estates, seeking into the distresses of his vassals, relieving the distressed, and punishing the oppressors, according to the tenure of his oath.

"His estates in Scotland were large, in the islands contracted; but however small, he observed, the possessors were equally entitled to justice, the distribution of which he entrusted to no hireling. Sworn enemy of pomp, he travelled only with two domestics, with whom he crossed over in our vessel to Lewes.

"In this short voyage, fortune was my friend. By some means I attracted the notice of the chief, who asked me various questions, to which I answered so satisfactorily, that before we reached home, I was no inconsiderable favourite. On our arrival, as he had no dwelling on

the island, he asked my father if he could accommodate him for a day or two—an honour which the good man was far from declining. This was the first instance I had seen of my mother's humility, and which she now showed by chiding my father, when alone, for his folly in undertaking to entertain such a noble guest. However, as it was already settled, she was obliged to arrange everything as well as she could for his reception. In this business none was more active than myself. The character of the chief for bravery had gained my admiration, and his affability had won my heart, so that I was resolved to show him how sensible I was of the honour he conferred on our dwelling.

"As we reached home in the evening, the chief, taking some refreshment, retired to rest, as did the whole family; but my mind was too busily employed to let me sleep soundly; rising, therefore, at early dawn, I collected my companions, and telling them the occasion, entreated their assistance to procure a deer to entertain our noble guest.

"I happened to be beloved enough to prevail; and, to the number of twelve, we hastened to our haunts, where, by our cries arousing our game, we pursued it till near mid-day, when the deer entering a narrow defile, I drew my bow, and struck an arrow through its throat. Elated with success, we joined to carry our burden, and had just descended the mountains, when we were met by the chief Monteith, who had been riding round the vicinity. He halted on our approach, and asked us what we carried, when one of my comrades, not suspecting his rank, from the plainness of his habit, hastily answered—''Tis only a deer St Clair M'Crae hath slain to make welcome a noble guest that is at his father's dwelling.'

"'Young man,' said the chief, addressing me, 'your father knew not of this enterprise, for he hath sought you this morning.'

"'When he sees such good cheer, he will pardon me,' answered I bluntly.

"'I trust he will,' replied he. 'There is some money, too, for thee. As I appear to have been the cause of thy absence, let it join with the deer in pleading for thee.'

"'I did not kill it to sell,' answered I, with an emotion that did not escape him, and turning from his offered gift.

"'What then?' said the chief.

"'Why, to make you welcome. Had it been to carry to market, I would not have taken the trouble.'

"The chief smiled. 'Well, then,' answered he, 'thy companions will, I hope, accept my present; thanks will be all I shall offer to thee.'

"'And more than I ask. If it pleases you I shall be satisfied.'

"We then hastened home, my comrades elated with the money, and I at least a foot taller, in my own opinion, from the refusal to accept it.

"In the evening, my father being on board his vessel unloading goods, and I remaining at home, the chief requested my mother to suffer me to converse with him for an hour. Proud as I was of this distinction, my mother by no means appeared to approve it. She said my rudeness would speedily disgust him; but fearful of offending by a refusal, I was permitted to attend. Our best apartment was appropriated to his use, and he sat at a small table with a jug of wine before him. Making me take a cup, he drank to my health, and conversing on different subjects, I soon forgot the distance between us, and became as free and communi-

cative as with my fellows. He asked me of our family, and for what profession my father designed me.

"'To follow his own,' I replied; 'but I like it not. If I live to be a man, I will be a soldier, and either more than St Clair M'Crae, or nothing.'

"To this hour I remember the look the chief gave me; it, however, had in it no severity to abash me, and asking him questions respecting battles in which he had been engaged, he informed me with a kindness that completed the satisfaction his conversation gave me.

"On the ensuing morning, with my comrades, I again went to hunt. The chief, willing to witness our dexterity, followed on horseback, and leaving his beast at the bottom of the mountain, accompanied us on foot. Though not sufficiently active to keep up with us, for he was near fifty, he from a height witnessed the sport. Fortune again stood my friend, and I struck a deer, but my arrow had scarcely fixed, and we had secured our prey, when I sorely repented my skill, for out of one of the hollows of the dell leaped a young fawn, who fearlessly approached its wounded dam. The moment before, my utmost ambition had been to show my dexterity to the chief, but the sight of the fawn drove him clean from my thoughts; I drew the arrow from the wound, but in vain—the stroke had been too sure, and the animal's limbs already trembled with the last pang of nature. I snatched up the fawn; my companions carried the doe, and we quitted the mountain. The chief had reached the valley as soon as ourselves. 'You draw the bow bravely, St Clair,' said he, addressing me; hereafter, in such skilful hands, it may prove a tremendous weapon against the enemies of your country.'

"'I will never more draw it against a deer,' replied I; 'see if have not slain the mother of this poor beast; I had rather have been without venison to the day of my death.'

"'You must adopt the orphan,' answered the chief; 'feed it with milk—it will do well.'

"'Aye, if I could procure it; but my mother will not give it me. She boxed my ears the other day for giving a bowl to Donald Stragie, and, worse than that, hath locked the buttery ever since.'

"The chief laughed. 'Hadst thou,' said he, 'rather have thy ears boxed than the buttery door locked?'

"Marry had I, for women's blows break no bones, and, as my father says, they are no disgrace, for lap-dogs will bark at lions: fastening the the buttery door is of much more consequence, for, let who will want I cannot now give them a sup.'

"'Well, then,' replied he, 'I must adopt the orphan myself; come on —we will devise means hereafter.'

"The same day, after dinner, I attended the chief in a walk, and, meeting a herdsman, he bought a cow, which he gave me for any use I choose to appropriate it.

"After a stay of some days, the chief, who meant to visit some of the adjacent isles, prepared to depart, and to my great delight requested my parents to suffer me to attend him, saying he would bring me home on his return. This request it was impossible to refuse to a man of his rank, though I could not but perceive it was by no means agreeable to my parents; however, of that I thought but little, and departed with a joyful heart with my protector.

"During his journey an event happened that conduced to strengthen the friendship the good man had already conceived for me. A wound he had received some years before, which had been improperly healed, broke out afresh, and for a considerable time bore a very alarming appearance, so that it obliged us to leave the islands, and cross to Scotland for advice. I watched him during the whole progress, and will truly confess, from affection; so that when, in performance of his promise, he spoke of returning me to my father, I entreated with the utmost earnestness to be only suffered to remain till he was well. Yielding to my request, he sent a messenger with an excuse, and we continued our way to his paternal estate in Perthshire.

"The chief Monteith was an only son, but his father marrying some years after the death of his mother, a daughter nearly twenty years younger than himself, was the fruit of his second union. After being many years in the service of his country, he went to Spain, from whence he embarked for the Holy Land; and after some years, returned to his native land, where he found his parents dead, and his only sister, Mariam, wedded to the Earl of Roskelyn (father to the present Earl), and mother to a promising lad of ten years old.

"The chief was a bachelor, and his estate entirely at his own disposal. The Lady Roskelyn, therefore, who, from his partiality to her, and their near affinity of blood, judged herself the indubitable heir, paid him particular attention.

"His wound had rendered him incapable of riding. He therefore travelled slowly in a horse litter, while I rode by his side. You may more easily judge than I describe my feelings at first sight of the grandeur and extent of the castle of Monteith. In the valley beneath the castle is a religious house, built and endowed by Monteith's mother for twelve fathers, who, informed of our arrival, came out at the head of some hundreds of the vassals to meet and welcome their chief. The good man stopped the litter, and spoke to all within his reach, but more particularly noticed an aged man, whose white beard reached to his middle, and whom I afterwards understood was said to be possessed of the gift of second sight. Many years before he had been steward to the household, but for the last ten, incapable of business, had ceased from care, and lived at ease in the castle. His appearance and age commanded respect, and the chief not only addressed him, but shook him by the hand. The old man's eyes sparkled with affection and gratitude, and he walked by the side of the litter till we reached the dwelling.

"A few days' quiet and proper attendance tended greatly to the restoration of Monteith. I had been his assiduous nurse during his illness, and as noble minds are ever grateful, such was his attachment to me that I was continually suffered to remain in his chamber, where he would laugh at my blunt sallies, and by his freedom encourage them.

"We had been about fourteen days at the castle, when the Earl and Countess of Roskelyn arrived. His reception of them was such as a good heart and an unsuspecting mind suggested, and to their young son, John, he paid particular attention, though to his father he complained of the effeminacy of his manners, and the want of care in his education.

"As the chief was sufficiently recovered to dine in the hall, to show honour to the noble guests, many more vassals than were accustomed to attend, waited on the board. On these select occasions, the venerable

steward, Andrew, never failed to fulfil his old duty of presenting the cup to his master, and which to have refused him, as the chief observed, would have been such an affront to his years as he would neither commit nor countenance.

"On the day of their arrival the dinner had passed with apparent satisfaction and hilarity in all parts. I stood among the vassals without being commanded or offering to serve the guests, when the chief beckoning me—'My good lad, give me a cup of wine: the Lady Roskelyn must honour the oldest vassal of her father's house, the worthy Andrew, by receiving one from him.'

"I hastened to fulfil the command given. Andrew at the same time, with his tremulous hand, presented a goblet to the countess, who gave as a pledge—'Prosperity and never-fading honour to the house of Monteith.'

"The high roof of the hall re-echoed with the acclamations of the vassals, the minstrels prepared to play, and the chief with a smile of satisfaction thanked his sister, when on a sudden the mirth was changed to alarm, by the ancient, Andrew, falling on the marble pavement, his palsied limbs shaking with convulsions, and his features distorted with agony.

"'The Virgin and holy saints direct us,' exclaimed the vassals, dropping on their knees; 'the spirit is upon him—touch him not.'

"'Give him air—crowd not around him,' said the chief; ''tis doubtless one of those paroxysms to which aforetime he hath, as I have heard, been accustomed. Seat him on a chair—nay I will have it so, his aged limbs will be bruised against the pavement.'

"The chief was immediately obeyed. For some moments the old man continued to struggle, when, on a sudden, he became placid, his glazed eyes fixed on his master, to whose chair I had clung from fear, and rising as it were above the weakness of his age, his voice became loud and sonorous, and such was the impression I received from his words that never shall I forget them.

"'The beasts of the field and the wolves of the mountain nourish and suckle their young; the birds of the air feed their brood and shelter them under their wings, but a wanton woman casteth forth her children even as summer flies do their eggs in the shambles.'

"The old man ceased, his eyes closed, and neither breath nor motion betokened life.

"'Out upon the hypocritical defamer of woman;' exclaimed the countess, though she trembled as she spoke; 'let him be conveyed to his chamber, and utter his falsehoods at leisure, so he pollute not our ears.'

"'Sister,' replied the chief, with marked severity, 'the oldest vassal of your father's house, did not even his age amount to fourscore and eight years, deserves more charity. If Heaven speaks through these inspired men, all we can do is to listen with reverence.'

"The Lady Roskelyn made no reply, but, by the crimson of her cheek, showed the conflict of passions that raged within her bosom.

"Again the old man's breast heaved, and again his eyes opened, and, fixing them as before, upon the chief he continued—'See the hand of Heaven! it points the way! it mocks at the cunning of man: vice shall live in fear; and right and truth prevail. The master hath his own! but, alack! alack! with what an unthrifty hand he spreads his store! and ingratitude and avarice shall again triumph, till the red mane shall bite the ground under the feet of the willing captive!"

"The aged Andrew again ceased: and awful silence reigned throughout the hall, when, after a long pause, he again started and broke into speech.

"'Hark: the sound of pleasure re-echoes through the halls of Monteith; the minstrels sing to the sound of the bagpipe, the harp, and the clarishoe! Widows and orphans weep with joy! Universal gladness reigns, and deadly foes quaff wine from the same friendly goblet!'

"Old Andrew ceased, and in a few minutes his features sunk into their usual state; but, like a man suddenly awakened from sleep, he gazed round him with a vacancy that showed his recollection of worldly objects was not returned. Feeble as an infant, his limbs refused their office; and he was at length removed with care and tenderness to his chamber.

"For the first part of the prophecy, I cannot but think it hath been verified in myself; but, for the latter, it is involved in darkness, and, no doubt, if ever it comes to pass, not in my days; but, if reserved to my children, more welcome than to myself.

"For some time after Andrew had been carried out and the vassals withdrawn, all continued silent. The chief had ordered me to remain, and, considering me as a boy to whom no heed need be päid, spoke freely before me. 'Sister,' said he, addressing the countess, 'what think you now of old Andrew? If he feigns, in faith he acts with such an exact similitude to nature, that he hath caused an emotion within my bosom that neither the enemies of my country, nor the foes of the blessed cross ever had to boast, for I even yet tremble, and big drops of sweat fall from my brow.'

"The Earl of Roskelyn made no reply, but appeared lost in thought.

"'Dear brother,' replied the countess, in some measure endeavouring to recover her spirits, I perhaps judged Andrew harshly; for, never before witnessing such an event, it startled me.'

"More discourse passed on the subject, and before the evening, the usual hilarity prevailed. The chief desired me to see Andrew.

"'My good lad,' said he, 'to me,' thou hast been a tender keeper; look in, I pray thee, on my old friend; and though thou shouldst not be so successful as with myself, thou hast a monitor within that will repay thy attention.'

"My own inclination seconded the chief's request. I hastened to the chamber of the old man, whom I found in a sound and quiet sleep, and attended by two of the vassals.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"On the ensuing morning, the chief visited Andrew in his chamber. He was then collected, but appeared to have no remembrance of what had passed; yet, grateful for the attention paid him by his master, he respectfully raised his hand to his lips. For two days no material alteration took place; on the third it was evident that the hand of death was upon him; for, though no violent pain had followed the convulsions he suffered in the hall, yet that strong emotion had been too much for his feeble strength to support, and he expired the fourth day after, sensible to his last hour, and mingling with the prayers he put up for his own

soul, others for his noble master, and the general welfare of the house of Monteith. This venerable domestic's death was lamented by the chief like that of an old friend; and commanding him to be laid in the chapel, he ordered a monthly mass to be said for his soul's rest.

"In the mean time, as boys naturally associate, Lord John and myself became in some measure companions, he being not more than two years younger than myself. Nature and education had, however, drawn a line between us; he was fair, I was brown, he was delicate, I was robust; pampered and nursed from his cradle, he shrunk at every blast, and dreaded a shower of rain as much as doth a cat. For myself, inured to the war of elements, they neither hurt my spirits nor my health; and cold, hunger, or thirst, if felt one hour, were with me forgotten as soon as removed. Our tempers were equally dissimilar; he had been accustomed to vassals humble as slaves, who, from his infancy had submitted to all his caprices, which, strengthened by time, had rendered him perverse, vindictive, and tyrannical; for me, habituated to the ill-humour of my mother, the rough kindness of my father, and to attend on myself; or, if I took an unwarrantable liberty with my companions, sure of being handsomely drubbed—nay, if I had struck the old dog, of being bitten: the case was quite different. My temper, naturally passionate, was kept within the bounds of reason; and I was careful of giving offence. I was, however, when provoked, as perverse and saucy as most; and naturally strong, even before I left Lewes, few boys of my own age chose to enter the list of combat with me.

"With the Lord John I bore even more than I had been accustomed to. I respected him as the nephew of my beloved patron, and sometimes thought, if he had been better tempered, I could have loved him sincerely.

"I have dwelt thus long on this subject, because a trifle that followed led to a discovery that otherwise might never have been revealed.

"We had been playing one afternoon in the hall, when among other pastimes, I took him on my back, and, regardless of his weight, paced up and down full speed. We had amused ourselves in this manner for some time, when, watching an opportunity, he procured a large thorn, which having secretly fastened to his heel, he gave me a sharp spur on the leg. I have already said I was passionate, and that forbearance was not among the catalogue of my merits: I therefore took no time for reflection; had he been heir-apparent to the crown of Scotland, I should have acted the same.

"'You have treated me like a sorry beast,' said I, with anger, 'for none else need the spur; and in return I will play you a jade's trick.'

"So saying. I made a plunge, and threw him on the marble pavement, regardless of the consequence. My heart, however, in a moment smote me; but the deed was done—his face was covered with blood, and his cries re-sounded through the hall, and not only brought several of the vassals, but also the Lady Roskelyn.

"With every exaggeration a little mind could invent, he related what had happened; while I stood in silence, listening not only to him, but to the reproaches of his mother, who was not sparing of her invectives.

"'Beggarly knave,' said she, 'how didst thou dare to strike my son? I will have thee scourged to death.'

"'Strike your son!" repeated I; 'I should be ashamed to strike such

a butterfly; but though I let him ride me like a horse, I did not choose to be used like an ass.'

"'He did thee too much honour to use thee in any manner,' replied she; 'my brother will now see his folly in noticing such scurvy varlets as thou art, who prove but monuments of his weakness.'

"'Whoever calls the chief foolish or weak,' said I, passionately, 'is a false liar; never shall his kindness to me bring disgrace on him.'

"'Not till thou comest under the hands of the executioner; which the more speedy that may happen, the better for mankind.'

"'Marry, your own silken son may better deserve the hand of the executioner than I,' answered I, with blunt sauciness. 'Lord John of Roskelyn doth not dread disgrace more than St Clair M'Crae.'

"'Than whom?' eagerly repeated she, with considerable emotion.

"'St Clair M'Crae,' echoed I, undauntedly; 'I am not ashamed of my name, nor shall I eat my words, though you are a *lady;* we have none in the isle of Lewes; so I have not learned to fear them.'

"You may perhaps conjecture this insolence increased her anger, but it had a contrary effect, for the flush of passion gave way to a sickly pale, and had she not seated herself on a chair, she had fallen. She fixed her eyes on me with fearful earnestness, her lips trembled, but no word escaped them; and such was her whole appearance, that what her violence would never have effected, her looks instantly obtained; for young, inexperienced, and rudely bred as I was, they sunk into my heart, and seemed to thrill it with horror.

"The chief and Lord Roskelyn were not in the castle during the confusion, but on their return were informed of it, with all the bitterness that the malice of Lady Roskelyn could invent. My patron listened to it with astonishment. Such conduct, he said, was so different to my general character, that he could scarcely have given it credit from any other person than his sister.

"I was ordered into his presence, a step that all the art of the Lady Roskelyn could not prevent, and on entering the hall, found the whole party arranged to condemn me.

"'St Clair,' said the chief, with more severity than I had ever before seen him assume, 'I am at once grieved for thee and for myself; for thee first, that thou couldst forget thyself so far as to use my nephew so roughly, and disregard his age and strength, which are both inferior to thine, and to add to thy guilt, by thy insolence to my sister, the mother of him thou hast injured. For myself, I am vexed to have been so mistaken; I would have pledged my life on thy courage and humanity, and, at fifty, I love not to be the dupe of a green head like thine.'

"He paused, as if he expected my answer, but I made none, and he continued—'Thou must prepare to return home. Two of my vassals shall see thee restored to thy father, whom I shall not inform of this folly, for he is an honest man, and it would vex him, but I pray thee think of it, and remember that valour is disgraced by malicious actions, and by seeking unequal contests. Farewell—I shall not forget thy attention to me during my journey, and will order thee a memorial to prove that I am not ungrateful.'

"The chief ceased. My heart swelled almost to bursting, but too proud to let a tear escape me, I with some difficulty replied—'I am ready to depart when you list, and need no one to conduct me. For malicious

acts, or seeking unequal opponents, I am unacquainted with either. If you think me guilty, it is enough, I shall gladly depart. Recompence I will none; my heart dictated my actions, and when I saw you well, repaid me.'

"The chief turned aside, and the words, 'Strange boy!' escaped him. I touched my cap to him only, and had crossed the hall in order to leave it, when he called suddenly—'Come back, St Clair, thou owest me an explanation of thy conduct, and I demand it.'

"'You should have asked before you condemned me,' said I; 'Lord John can resolve you.'

"'Dear brother,' said Lady Roskelyn, who had not before spoken, 'dismiss him at once; his presence gives me pain; he only seeks to impose further on your unsuspicious nature.'

"Influenced by the obstinacy of my temper, though I had again prepared to leave the hall, Lady Roskelyn's words again arrested my steps.

"'Not so, sister,' answered the chief; 'I would willingly act uprightly. St Clair's reproof is just. I should not have condemned him unheard.' Then turning to me, he added—'Nay, I insist on thy coming back to have the explanation I asked; but say, why art thou lame?'

"'Ask your nephew,' answered I.

"The chief turned to Lord John, but he was silent, and his mother again requested her brother to dismiss me.

"Monteith made no reply, but rising from his seat, detained me in his strong grasp.

"'By my soul,' said he, 'I will be satisfied—therefore, answer me, from whence comes this blood?'

"Like a fawn in the gripe of a lion, contest was useless, and drawing aside my tartan, I showed my knee, inflamed by a wound just below it.

"'Oh, the arch deceiver!' exclaimed the Lady Roskelyn, 'he hath done this himself on purpose to lay the fault on my son.'

"'Indeed, uncle,' said John, 'I only gave him a little spur with a thorn, but not enough to hurt his knee so much.'

"'At length,' said the chief, "truth is coming; but I am already nearly satisfied;' then, turning to a domestic who waited, he commanded him to call the leech who attended his household, when, placing me in his own seat, he ordered him to examine my leg. The leech, at the first view, declared it was dangerously inflamed, and from the appearance of the wound had doubtless some splinter or other substance within it, which must needs be extracted before aught could be done.

"The chief's face flushed with anger, and the Lord Roskelyn looked reproachfully on his son, who began weeping, while his mother finding no honour likely to result to her darling, led him from the hall, and was speedily followed by her lord.

"I shuddered at the sight of the polished instrument which the leech held in his hand, and drew back till the chief, assuming a reproachful air, said—'Is it possible, St Clair, that a bold fellow like thee should tremble at the sight of a lancet? Marry, I should as soon have expected thee to tremble at a lady's bodkin.'

"The chief's raillery had the effect he intended. I immediatcly held out my leg, and suffered the leech to lay open the wound, from whence he extracted a thorn of near an inch in length, and which the motion of walking had caused to perforate deeply into the flesh.

"'The operation over, the chief for the first time embraced me—'St Clair,' said he, 'thou art a brave, but an obstinate boy, but from this hour I will never judge harshly—yet in this case my judgment rather than my heart was in fault.'

"The honour of having the approbation of so good and so great a character overpowered me, and, grasping his hand, I burst into tears. 'I have indeed been to blame,' said I, 'but pain and passion overpowered me, and made me treat him so rudely, for which I am now sincerely sorry.'

"'I trust,' replied he, 'it will prove a useful lesson; his mother will entirely corrupt him with her fondness, and Lord Roskelyn possesses not strength of mind sufficient to resist her; but lean on the men and hie thee to thy chamber; rest is now all that is needful; I will see thee speedily.'

"What passed between the chief and his family I never exactly knew, but he so warmly espoused my cause, and words ran so high between them, that the Lord and Lady Roskelyn left the second day after.

"A few days restored me to my usual agility, and to more than my usual favour with the chief, who, I afterwards found, had resolved from that time to take me under his especial protection. He condescended himself to teach me the science of manly defence, and the use of arms; and six hours daily did he make me devote to the study of literature, of which I was before totally ignorant, placing me for that purpose under the care of the friars of the neighbouring monastery.

"One day that the chief was teaching me the broadsword in the hall, M'Crae was announced, and instantly ordered to be admitted. Though I rejoiced to see him, my satisfaction was mixed with fear lest he should want to take me back to the island on his return. The chief received him with the cordiality of a friend, ordered him refreshment, and saying as he conversed with him—'In faith, M'Crae, 'tis well you are come to teach as our duty, for I could almost forget St Clair is not my son, and, in return, he hath almost learned to consider me as a father.

"M'Crae, confounded with the kindness of the chief to himself, and his familiarity with me, hesitated, appeared confused, and impressed with some secret errand he knew not how to disclose, and which visibly affected his spirits. At length he stammered out—'So please you, noble sir, my boy hath too long intruded on your goodness. His mother is impatient to see him.'

"'To see me,' repeated I, with my accustomed bluntness; 'which way doth the wind blow now? She used to say the house was heaven when I was abroad.'

"The chief smiled, and M'Crae could not refrain from laughing. 'No wonder,' said he; 'thou art a boisterous fellow, and never failed to put her house in confusion ten times a day.'

"'I fear I shall offend the same way on my return,' answered I.

"'Retire for a while, St Clair; I have business with thy father,' said the chief.

"I obeyed, and left the hall, when, resuming the discourse, he continued—'M'Crae, I love thy son, and wish to make him a brave fellow, but though I will purchase no man's child, yet, regarding him as I do, I cannot be unmindful of his father. Thy vessel is small—let it be sold, and I will enable thee to buy another of double her burden. I have also

land nearly adjoining to thine at Toray; to me it is of little value; thou art welcome to use twenty acres of it. In case of my death, I will forthwith make thee a grant thereof.'

"M'Crae gazed at Monteith, as if he doubted the evidence of his senses. 'Why, what now, man?' continued the chief. 'Dost thou dispute my word?'

"'Pardon me, noble sir,' replied M'Crae. 'Your goodness took from me the power to express my gratitude. St Clair is a brave boy, and would be no disgrace to a nobler father than myself.'

"'Come, 'tis an agreement, then. The boy shall see you yearly; though I may be his friend, he shall not forget that you are his father. Choose a good strong vessel—money shall not be wanting. We will sail in her among your first passengers to Lewes.'

"M'Crae's heart, naturally honest, was overpowered by the chief's generosity.

"'So may my soul prosper hereafter,' said he, 'if I speak not truly. Were the choice mine, I would joyfully resign the boy to your care, but as it is, I am bound by an oath not to part with him.'

"'Bound by an oath!' answered Monteith, in a voice of astonishment —'what, to your wife, I trow? But I yield: yet remember, true affection should have tempted you to accept my offer. However, as I love not to raise expectations to cast them down by disappointment, I repeat, purchase the vessel, and take the land I before offered, but on this condition—that thou holdest it in trust for thy son, St Clair.'

"M'Crae threw himself at the chief's feet, and clasped his garment, but could not speak. At that moment one of the fathers of the monastery entered the hall. His name was Thomas, and, added to a strong and cultivated understanding, he possessed a penetrating and sound judgment, accompanied with a thorough knowledge of the human heart. Seeing the posture of the chief and M'Crae, he drew back, and would have quitted the hall, but Monteith recalled him, and in a few minutes related what had passed.

"Father Thomas listened with attention to the recital, and on the conclusion, said, 'But what man hath a right to exact an oath from a father to keep his son in an inferior line of life; yet an oath is sacred, for it is registered in heaven, and witnessed by the saints?'

"'It was registered in hell, and witnessed by devils!' said M'Crae. Like Eve, Katie tempted me to sin, and now, to complete the measure of my iniquity, the curse of ingratitude is upon me.'

"'If thou hast done evil, repentance is yet in thy power, my son,' said Father Thomas.

"M'Crae's firm features unbent, and his ruddy complexion became a faded yellow.

"'Holy friar,' said he, hastily, 'I am not the father of the boy!'

"'Away with such a subterfuge,' said the chief, 'I will no more; I forgive thy refusal, but falsehood I cannot brook.'

"'How know you he speaks falsely?' said the friar: 'his heart is open to God, and he alone can judge it.'

"'Pardon me,' answered Monteith, 'I will away, so that, if ye desire, ye may discourse more at leisure.'

"'Noble master, I conjure you stay. Should I forfeit my oath, say, father, can the sin be forgiven?'

"'If it be a just oath, and taken for honest purposes, I again conjure thee to hold it sacred; but if one prompted for dishonest and vile designs, tear it from thy soul, and throw thyself on the mercy of thy Creator.'

"'But, father,' replied M'Crae, 'I shall by the relation throw shame on some of the noblest blood of Scotland, and perhaps be sentenced to the horrors of a dungeon.'

"The chief again attempted to leave the hall, but M'Crae entreated his stay, while the friar answered—'The chief, or I mistake his character, is too just to condemn on light conjecture, and for the shame thou alludest to, let it fall where 'tis due.'

"A secret dread still appeared to impress the mind of M'Crae—'Promise me, noble master, your pardon,' said he, addressing the chief.

"Monteith, who at the beginning of the discourse, expected only some trivial relation of no concern, had insensibly become interested, and bade him begin without fear.

"M'Crae prepared to obey, but the friar prevented him by first drawing the cross from his side, and saying—'Behold this sacred symbol of our everlasting hope; it is made of wood taken from the blessed sepulchre at Jerusalem; lay it to thy lips, and swear to advance nothing but truth in what thou art about to relate.'

"M'Crae pressed the cross to his lips, took the vow, and entered on the relation.

"'I was born,' said he, 'in the shire of Caithness. My father and Katie Lawrie's were neighbours. I loved her from her childhood, and I believe she did the same by me. I offered to wed her, and labour to support her, but Katie was for waiting until she got together some money to begin the world with; and one of her sisters being engaged to attend a lady in the south, no persuasions could prevent Katie from accompanying her. We, however, swore to be true to each other, and breaking silver between us, separated.

"'After Katie's departure, I engaged in a trading vessel, and soon became a good seaman, and succeeded so far as to collect a small sum, which I did not fail to inform her of by letter. She congratulated me on my success, and informed me that she had been engaged into the service of the widow of the chief Monteith, who, with her daughter, was then at Edinburgh.'

"'Mean you my mother-in-law and sister?' said the chief, interrupting the relation.

"'I do,' answered he; 'you, noble master, were then in the Holy Land; your father had been dead some years, and the dame and the Lady Mariam were for the first time in the city.

"'From this period I often heard news of Katie by various messengers, and also that the Lady Monteith was dead, and that her daughter still remained at Edinburgh.

"'Thus passed four years, when I received a letter from Katie by a special messenger. It was to press me to come immediately to espouse her, as she had hopes of procuring the means of fixing us comfortably for life.

"'Though much astonished at this letter, I obeyed the request it conveyed, and, returning with the messenger, he conducted me to a lone house in the suburbs of the city, where I had not remained long before

Katie joined me, but so fine a lady that I scarcely knew her. We were, however, glad to see each other; and among more news, she informed me that her young lady was to be married to the Lord Roskelyn, on his return from France, where some months before he had gone on an embassy.

"'Not to weary you, we were wedded, and soon after, Katie having first sworn me to secrecy, informed me that if I strictly observed her injunctions, our fortune would be made. Alas! I fear to continue.'

"The chief bade him continue without dread, and after some hesitation he resumed his narrative.

"'Katie at length informed me that the Lady Mariam was pregnant.'

"'Hell and destruction!' interrupted the chief, 'this is too much: thou false villain, I will tear the lie from thy perjured heart!'

"M'Crae trembled, but Friar Thomas re-assured him.

"'I pray you,' said he, addressing the chief, 'let the man relate his story. Should it be false, rage can come hereafter.'

"The chief made no reply, and the friar requested Mr M'Crae to continue.

"'Katie said that Lady Mariam had long been courted by the Lord Roskelyn, that their marriage had only been delayed by her mother's death, and in the intervening time he had been ordered to France on a secret mission, which could not be refused without dishonour; that after his departure the Lady Mariam found herself with child, and, distracted with grief and shame, had vowed to destroy herself rather than outlive the disgrace.'

"M'Crae then, with not a few indignant interruptions by the chief, narrated the steps taken for concealment—the result being that the countess's child was born in M'Crae's cottage, and taken by them to their island home, as their own. 'We travelled,' he said, 'by easy journeys into Inverness-shire, where, after some stay, I purchased a small vessel that lay on the coast, as a seafaring life was more agreeable to my wishes. In this vessel I went to Lewes, where I afterwards fixed with my wife. We frequently heard of the Lady Mariam, (soon after Lady Roskelyn,) who never failed to send us a good present every year or two; and this continued till you, noble master, came to Lewes.

"'And now, I conclude, thou hast done,' said the chief; ''tis a well-connected story, to be sure, and I give thee all due credit for thy invention.'

"'I have not yet done,' replied M'Crae. 'My wife was vexed, that you, sir, were our guest. She feared a discovery, but I thought that impossible. We trembled to let the boy go with you, but did not dare refuse. The messenger that you were pleased to send, filled both myself and wife with the most distressing anxiety, as we feared that at the castle of Monteith, St Clair might meet his mother, to whom, though his person might be unknown, the name of St Clair M'Crae would not fail to discover him. In this dilemma we were uncertain how to act, when, about a month since, we received a letter from Lady Roskelyn, by a vessel that touched at Lewes.'

"'Have you that letter?' hastily demanded the chief.

"'I have,' replied M'Crae; 'it may give me a credit you deny my words;' so saying, he drew it from his pocket, and presented it to Monteith.

"The chief's face flushed on viewing the hand-writing; on perusing it, he found as follows:—

"KATE M'CRAE,—I judged that my kindness and liberality to you for so many years had secured your friendship and observance; if so, whence comes it that I find the boy St Clair at the castle of Monteith? If you value my future favour, send your husband immediately to fetch him home: no man has, a right to detain the son of another. If you have the will, you cannot fail of the means to obey me; which if you do not, we are henceforward strangers. If I find you observant, you shall hear from me speedily. M. B.

"The chief laid down the letter, and calmly desired M'Crae to proceed, if he had aught else to relate.

"M'Crae replied, that on the receipt of the letter, his wife had insisted on his immediately fetching St Clair home—'And now, noble master,' added he, 'though you have accused me of falsehood, I declare before God, that I am innocent. Your kind and noble offers stung me to the heart, for I was conscious how little I deserved them. I seek not, nor wish reward; but I have done my duty, and that must be my consolation.'

"'M'Crae,' replied the chief, 'I am lost in perplexity, but will, if possible, search this business to the bottom. If thou hast dealt falsely by me, look to the consequence; if thou hast not, thy fortune I take upon myself. For the present, if thou valuest my friendship, keep all secret from St Clair, and remain for some days at the castle.'

"M'Crae promised obedience, and, soon after, the chief dismissed him to repose after his journey.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"AFTER M'Crae withdrew, the strange tale he had related furnished a long conversation for the chief and father Thomas. The latter appeared to give entire credit to the relation—the former, on the contrary, had it not been for the letter, would have disbelieved the whole; but that circumstance was too strong to be overlooked; for, without some powerful motive, why should the boy St Clair interest the proud and highly placed Lady Roskelyn.'

"'By my honour I will be satisfied;' said the chief. 'Should M'Crae speak true, the levity of my sister is the least of her guilt; to cast off her child, and bar him from his birthright—out upon her! I grieve to think she partakes of my father's blood.'

"'His birth proved,' replied the friar, 'as no just cause prevented the marriage of the parties, he is the lawful heir of the house of Roskelyn.*

"'True; but I cannot yet fully believe the tale; however, while I detain M'Crae, do thou hasten to the island, acquaint his wife of the discovery, but let her not know by whom it was made; from her behaviour we shall be the better enabled to judge.'

"On the return of father Thomas, he had a long conference with the chief, whom he informed that he had accused Katie M'Crae with secreting the heir of a noble family, and threatened with the weight of the law,

* By the law of Scotland, subsequent marriage of the parents legitimates the child.

and the anathema of the church, unless, by a full disclosure of all she knew, she saved herself from the penalty. Katie thus pressed, threw herself at the feet of the friar, confirming all that M'Crae had before advanced. In farther corroboration, she likewise produced several letters from the countess, in all of which the boy St Clair was mentioned, though none of them particularly entered into the subject.

"This relation nearly obliterated all doubt from the mind of the chief; yet, still unwilling to consider his sister in so odious a point of view, he ordered me to prepare to attend him to Roskelyn.

"Though ignorant, of the reason, I obeyed; and, with some few domestics, we travelled to the castle.

"The family was absent on an excursion of pleasure, and we waited three days for their return, when the Lord Roskelyn first arrived.

"The dissension that had taken place two months before at the castle of Monteith made a visit unexpected; and the chief was received with uncommon satisfaction.

"Dining alone in the hall with the earl, and the repast ended, the chief began a discourse concerning the embassy in which the Lord Roskelyn had been engaged in France, prior to his marriage; from which, reverting to the Lady Roskelyn, he said:—

"'My sister, at that period, was very young; the death of my mother-in-law, and my absence, left her under too little restraint; human nature is frail; however, Roskelyn, thou wert an honourable fellow, and acted as every honest man should on such an occasion.'

"The earl blushed deeply.

"'To be the brother of the brave Monteith, was my ambition,' answered he, 'and believe me, the vexation I suffered from my protracted stay filled me with the utmost anxiety.'

"'It was indeed vexatious,' replied the chief, regarding the earl's words as in some degree a confirmation of his suspicions; 'more especially as it subjected your first-born to injustice.'

"'Roskelyn started, and appeared covered with confusion; he had, however, too much honour, or too little art, to deny what, by the chief's words, he appeared so well acquainted with, and after a moment's hesitation, replied—'Dear brother, this is an unpleasant subject to be renewed after so many years, and for which I have made every atonement in my power.'

"'Yes, to my sister; but to your unoffending boy something is surely due.'

"'Monteith,' replied the earl, 'the child died as soon as born, in which case, common prudence dictated concealment.'

"'Roskelyn's manner convinced the chief he had been abused, and he was on the point of undeceiving him, when a noise of horses was heard in the court, and the moment after Lady Roskelyn entered. Surprised, though rejoiced to see her brother, particularly as she supposed me returned with M'Crae, she gave him a hearty welcome; but her satisfaction was of short duration, for, addressing her, he continued the subject, saying—

"'A business of the utmost consequence brought me hither; no less, sister, than the right of your son, St Clair. Human nature is fallible; and shame, to a noble mind, is worse than death, yet Mariam, even these considerations must not render us unjust. Nay, shrink not; I feel too much for you, to add reproach to your own feelings. Do justice, even now, and behold among the first of your vindicators, Monteith.'

"The internal struggles of the Lady Roskelyn, thus taken by surprise, were too great to suffer her to articulate; she sunk on the bosom of her lord, and concealed her face.

"'Brother,' said Roskelyn, 'have mercy; you are indeed misinformed.'

"'I am not misinformed,' replied the chief; 'the strong and haughty mind of Mariam would not sink thus under falsehood!'

"Lady Roskelyn did not raise her head, but, in a low voice, said to her husband—

"'Lead me forth, I pray you; I will talk with my brother to-morrow.'

"The chief was ever of opinion, that had the discovery been then pursued, she would have made an ample confession; but the tenderness of her husband and the lenity of her brother, spared her, and she was conducted to her chamber. Would you believe that this artful and unprincipled woman, when recovered from her first surprise, absolutely denied any knowledge of the business, further than she declared the chief's partiality for the boy St Clair had induced his parents to fabricate what she styled so infamous a lie, in order to ingratiate him still more; that, in regard to the letters that had passed between her and Katie M'Crae, they only tended to denote a mistaken predilection towards an undeserving and ungrateful object; and that her last, which ordered my return home, was alone dictated by prudential motives, which induced her not to calmly endure the prospect of the estate belonging to her house being lavished on a stranger!

"The pliant Roskelyn yielded credit to his wife's protestations; and though at first the chief purposed to brave the shame of the world, and declare his sister's disgrace and inhumanity, a short reflection altered his determination and made him resolve on silence.

"He immediately left the castle, and, hiring apartments in the city, assumed a conduct that, however flattering to me, he did not then explain. I ate at the same table, accompanied him wherever he went, and to complete my satisfaction, the name of St Clair M'Crae was changed to that of St Clair Monteith.

"King James the First was at that period a captive in England, and the government of Scotland was in the hands of Robert, Duke of Albany. One public day of audience, I accompanied the chief to the court, and was not a little surprised when ordered to attend him in the presence-chamber. The venerable Duke of Albany was seated on a chair of state, but at sight of the chief, immediately called him forward.

"'Monteith,' said he, 'thou art welcome; I never expected to see thee more; say, how can we bribe thee to visit us sometimes? A man like me at the close of life wishes to see his friends about him.'

"'Gracious sir,' replied Monteith, 'your words, while they reproach my neglect, are still more flattering to me; and believe me, that however negligent in form, my duty to the Duke of Albany hath never slept. Should he need an arm or a life, no man in Scotland shall be more ready than Monteith.'

"'I believe thee,' replied the Duke, 'and from no man in Scotland would I sooner claim the promise. So far, then, we are equal, but what lad hast thou there?' for, unacquainted with forms, I had advanced with him. 'In faith,' continued he, 'he is thine own, for he hath the port, the complexion, and the eyes of a Monteith.'

"'My noble lord, you have judged too hastily. A true soldier of the cross, I never was a father. This boy, the innocent victim of a cruel mother and of a weak father, I wish to appropriate to myself—at present, to give him my own name, and at my death, my fortune, provided your consent can be obtained to confirm and sanction the deed.'

"The Duke appeared astonished, and said—'Is this a hasty resolution, Monteith? If it is, give it a second consideration. You cannot adopt this youth without injuring your nearest ties of blood. You must, however, pass the evening with me, when we will converse more at large on this business.'

"At the evening conference, the chief, in my absence, related the reasons of his wish, and, a short time after, I was by law appointed to bear the arms of Monteith, and also declared heir to that house.

"These events were so astounding to me that they almost appeared like a dream; the chief became daily more attached to me, and I loved and reverenced him beyond all earthly beings.

"On our return to the castle, he one day said to me—

"'My good boy, though I regard you henceforward as my son, you must not forget your duty to M'Crae: he is not your father, but you owe him obligations which can only be repaid by the attention of a child.'

"'M'Crae not my father!' replied I, with astonishment; 'then who, I pray you, is?'

"'That hereafter thou shalt know; for the present thou must acknowledge me as such, though I have no right to the title.'

"'I would you had—I never shall love one so well.'

"'That your observance will show. Your childhood hath been neglected; let your more advanced years be so well employed in study, that the mis-spent time may be redeemed.'

"I was now immediately under the eye of Monteith, and studied with the utmost assiduity. In these studies I became acquainted with Ross, Hamilton, Randolph, and James M'Gregor.

"From the family of Roskelyn we were totally estranged.

"I visited M'Crae yearly, at which period I never failed to sail among the islands, and by the bounty of the chief, which enabled me to be generous, cultivated that friendship and attachment among the inhabitants that have since proved so serviceable to me.

"Thus passed the time until I was nineteen, when I accompanied the chief to the siege of Berwick, and in the subsequent contests that followed with the English.

"No material circumstance took place during this campaign but the burning of the town of Penrith by the Scots, and that of Dumfries by the English, at the latter of which I formed an acquaintance which I must more particularly relate.

"A detachment of our army at that time lay in ambush at a short distance from Dumfries, watching the motions of the enemy, when the sight of the flames reached us. The chief commanded me to advance at the head of three hundred men to assist the sufferers. At our approach the marauders hastily retreated, and I was fortunate enough to render some services, that afterwards were overpaid with the most flattering thanks.

"At the extremity of the town, where the flames raged with the utmost fury, at a casement I discovered a young girl wringing her hands

and imploring assistance. I took no time for reflection, but with the warmth of youth entered the house, and at considerable risk brought her out. As I rushed from the house, I was so nearly suffocated that I fell senseless on the ground. She was in the same state, but the fresh air speedily recovered us, when I was overwhelmed with the thanks of not only the maid I had rescued, but also with those of her father, Sir David Stuart.

"Ellen was at that time not more than sixteen, and in my eyes the fairest creature they had ever beheld. My heart was warm and undefended, therefore, though a short space cured the outward burns of my skin, the internal burns I had received were not so easily healed.

"The chief applauded me highly, and I began to be held in some estimation by many who heretofore had paid me no attention.

"The affection I felt for Ellen made me ardently wish to know to whom I owed my birth, yet no word had ever yet transpired; but the honour of the name of Monteith, and the courage which the world choose to give me credit for, preserved me from reproach.

"Sir David Stuart dwelt in Inverness-shire, at the Castle of the Valley. Thrice had I been there with the chief, who saw and approved my passion for Ellen, though he insisted I should show myself worthy the name I bore, before I should presume to think of marriage. This command, however unwillingly, I obeyed, and my passion was confined to my heart, or, at least, only expressed by my actions.

"At this period many Scots were serving in France under the command of the Duke of Touraine; thither did the chief send me to gain, as he said, experience. James and Randolph M'Gregor were my companions, and there we became acquainted with De Bourg.

"The campaign being ended, the chevalier, whose friendship we had been happy enough to gain, sold his patrimony, and accompanied us to Scotland. The chief was delighted with his character, and he remained our much-honoured and welcome guest for some time.

"Scarcely had I been three months at home when my noble, my dearest friend declined. It was, however, a decline worthy the life it followed. My only father died in my arms. He left me unconditional heir of his vast possessions, all of which I would have gladly yielded to have prolonged his life!"

Monteith was silent, and the discourse ceased till the ensuing evening, when he resumed his story.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"PREVIOUS to my ever-honoured friend's death, in the presence of Father Thomas, he informed me of all I have now related to you, adding, as he concluded—'The honour of my family hath made me weak enough to conceal this base and dishonest action, for which, St Clair, I have made thee all the amends in my power. If, therefore, I might advise thee, be satisfied with what thou hast, if they let thee enjoy it in quiet; but if not, thou art free to make what use thou pleasest of the intelligence I have revealed. Nature may, perhaps, at some future period, resume her rights in the bosom of thy mother; but, should it not, remember that the same Power who guided me to find thee on the coast of Toray, can direct thee to a yet better parent.'

"Such were the words of the chief, who died two days after the disclosure. Ardently as I wished to know my family, how did I shudder on the review! and for the present with a kind of conscious shame, resolved, as Monteith had advised, to bury the secret in my own heart.

"Six months after Monteith's death, my father, or rather the Earl of Roskelyn, fell into a lingering sickness; and in a storm that happened the winter after my uncle's death, the honest M'Crae perished; and with him (Katie being dead) I lost the last living witness of my real birth.

"The Earl of Roskelyn's malady proved fatal, and John succeeded him.

"The time now authorised me to visit Ellen, and I resolved to offer her my hand and heart; for which purpose I hastened to her father's castle. All there was grief and desolation; and it was with difficulty I prevailed to see her, when, with the utmost confusion, she informed me that her father's revenues, which were small, had some years since been mortgaged for four thousand marks; which sum, the creditor having called in, and Sir David being unable to pay, he had seized upon the whole domain, and they were on the point of retiring to the small house at Dumfries, from whence I had rescued her at the conflagration. My heart was hers; I therefore regarded my property the same; and begging her to be patient for a short time, I left her.

"In the hall I found the myrmidons of the law, taking an account of the furniture of the castle. My person was well known, and the generosity of my uncle, whom the world in general supposed to be my father, was universally talked of. I therefore offered my security for the debt and what expense had been incurred, on condition they directly left the dwelling. My offers were not rejected, and before Sir David or his daughter were acquainted with the business, the whole party had left the castle.

"Sir David, on inquiry, I found with his daughter, arranging some private papers previous to their departure. I entreated admittance, and with a satisfaction which I neither attempted nor could conceal, said—'My dear Sir David, I pray you cease your task—your tormentors are gone; there is your acquittal; let this disagreeable business be for ever forgotten."

"The old man appeared astonished, while Ellen, with an emotion of joy and gratitude, would have thrown herself at my feet, but I raised her in my arms.

"'Generous, noble young man!' said Sir David, 'in saving the life of my child, you also saved mine; and now you give us the means of life, how can I ever requite obligations of such magnitude?'

"I still clasped Ellen's hand; by an involuntary motion I bent my knee before her father—'My venerable friend!' replied I, 'suffer me to aspire to this maid; if I can win her heart, and your consent, the business of my life shall be to make her happy.'

"Ellen blushed, but not with displeasure; and the reply of Sir David was such as I then wished.

"Not to dwell on a subject, that now fills me with disgust to repeat, I was a warm and not an unthrifty lover; our marriage was, however, to be delayed till the mourning for the chief was expired. Both Sir David and Ellen supposed me his son; and, as it was of no moment, I let them remain in that error.

"About this time King James returned to Scotland, after having been detained prisoner in England almost twenty years, and for a while nothing was heard but mirth and rejoicing; all the beauties of the country repaired to the city, and among the foremost of these was Helen, universally admired and followed. She entered with avidity into all the gaieties of the city, and the simplicity of her character gave way to dress, coquetry and grandeur. I should perhaps speak more justly, if I said the manners of the town awoke the dormant qualities of her mind, which, I have since had sufficient conviction, were naturally corrupt and depraved.

"One of the king's hostages dying in England, was replaced, as by agreement, with one of equal rank; and I had the command of the escort to Durham. This business employed some time. On my return, I found Sir David and his daughter had retired to their castle. Some half-words that reached me, might, in a less confiding mind, have excited suspicion; but I regarded them only as the effect of envy at superior merit, until De Bourg and Ross both assured me, it was the received opinion that Ellen, dazzled with the wealth and superior rank of the Earl of Roskelyn, received his addresses: and that he was even then a visitor at their dwelling. Infatuated with love, I threw the whole blame on her father, and resolved to lose no time in hastening to her, assured, that, once supported by my presence, she would assert her own affection and my prior claim.

"I immediately took the way to Sir David's, and, on reaching the castle, though the apartments were illuminated, I was informed by the vassals that Sir David and his daughter had left it the day before. Dissatisfied with this reply, I took no time for rest, but proceeded to the castle of Monteith, where I had appointed to meet Ross, Hamilton, De Bourg and James M'Gregor. To them I imparted what had passed, and claimed their assistance and advice as to what measures to pursue.

"The result of these deliberations was, to try once more to gain admittance; but, if we found that impracticable, at all hazards to see and converse with Ellen.

"This plan arranged, we departed with a small retinue. Again I demanded admittance at the castle of Sir David, and was again refused, though at the same time I saw some of the vassals of the Lord Roskelyn at the gate. My rage was now at its height: I rode back and joined my comrades, who warmly entered into my affronts. Sir David was too old to meet my anger, and Lord Roskelyn not only appeared below it, but was also, I felt with horror, my brother.

"We rode leisurely along, conversing on what had passed, when, on a declivity beneath us, we saw a company of horsemen, gaily accoutred, and among them two women, one of whom I recognised by her air for Ellen, as I did some of the men for the mingled vassals of the houses of Stuart and Roskelyn, by the emblazonment of their habits. Half frantic at the sight, and my comrades warmly entering into my feelings, we vowed revenge; and, therefore, taking a circuit of the height on which we were, at the entrance of the valley suddenly met and surprised them.

"Two vassals preceded the party, after which rode Sir David, and to my great astonishment, Lady Roskelyn, followed by the earl and Ellen. The party of Sir David and Roskelyn for numbers, doubled ours; but we were better armed, and, accustomed to the rude encounters of war,

were strangers to fear. My friends closed the path, so that no one could pass, while I rode up, and addressing Sir David, demanded a conference with him.

"The old man hesitated, looked confused, and entreated me to call on him on the morrow; but this I peremptorily denied, well knowing, that if I let that opportunity escape, all future attempts to see him would prove fruitless.

"Lady Roskelyn appeared trembling and irresolute; she, I believe, had not seen me since my boyish days, and perhaps fearing to rouse my passion to say harsh truths, remained silent.

"Ellen was pale, and seemed ready to fall from her horse; while Lord Roskelyn, with haughty pride, approaching me, asked how I dared to bar the way.

"'John of Roskelyn,' replied I, 'if you know not ere this, my claim to Ellen Stuart, know it now. She is mine by her own free will and the consent of her father.

"'The son of M'Crae,' returned he ironically, 'can have no claim to the daughter of Sir David Stuart.'

"'Though raging with anger, the bitterness of contempt for a moment predominated, and, fixing my eyes with significant earnestness on the Lady Roskelyn, I replied—

"'In faith, like enough; M'Crae, though not of noble blood, was likely a gallant fellow, and fine ladies have sometimes strange fancies; Katie M'Crae was not my mother, and might serve her mistress in more ways than one. 'Tis a cunning man that knows his own child, and those who were not otherwise told might as soon take me for the heir of Roskelyn as thyself.'

"'Out upon thee, slanderer,' exclaimed the Lady Roskelyn; 'thank God, the king is returned, and will see justice done.'

"'I pray ye, mother, cease,' said John of Roskelyn, 'this is no time for words;' then addressing me, he added—'Let the women and Sir David pass; then I can decide this contest.'

"'Willingly, I consent to the last condition; but, by my soul, Ellen returns not to the castle till I have spoken with her; so arrange it to thy liking.'

"'This then,' said he, drawing his sword, and attacking me with a violence which I returned with equal heat; his vassals endeavoured to join him, but were kept off by my friends. Passion on both sides was too high to suffer the contention to be lasting, and I disarmed and slightly wounded my adversary.

"'Take your son, woman;' exclaimed I, addressing Lady Roskelyn; 'though you can forget your child, I cannot forget my brother.'

"She made no reply; the domestics busied themselves in binding up her son's wound, and prepared to bear him to the castle. I still insisted on conversing with Ellen, who either had, or pretended to have swooned, and was supported by one of the vassals, who had lifted her from her horse.

"My party kept that of Roskelyn in awe. I approached, her eyes were still closed, and I was not likely to obtain any reply, when a sudden resolution excited me; it was to bear her away to the castle of Monteith, and there to end the contention by being united to her by the rites of the church—a step my self-love flattered me she would gladly acquiesce in.

"This resolve was instantly executed. I lifted her from the ground, and with the assistance of one of my men, placed her gently before me on my charger, and in spite of the threats and entreaties of her father, the impotent rage of Roskelyn, the virulence of his mother, or the faint opposition of their vassals, bore her away, escorted by my friendly comrades.

"Notwithstanding every persuasion, Ellen remained silent for some miles. At length we reached a lone spot near Kenardie, halting at a small house inhabited by a vassal of Sir James Ross, where we prepared to refresh and rest for the night, the evening being far advanced. Soon after our entrance, my comrades left me alone with Ellen, when I once more entreated her to break the cruel silence she had so long preserved, repeating that necessity alone had obliged me to have recourse to violence, that she was dearer to me than life, and if, as she had frequently declared, I was equally so to her, at the first church we reached we might be united.

"She heard me through without interruption, then replied, though she blushed and held down her eyes as she spoke—'I need not tell you, St Clair, that my inclination followed the will of my father, when he consented to give you my hand; but then both he and myself considered you, if not by marriage, at least the son of the noble chief Monteith. We have been deceived. You owe your being to a common trader or fisherman, who, practising on the chief's weakness, got him to adopt you; and for the prosperity you now hold, by the forbearance of the house of Roskelyn, be assured it will speedily be claimed, and yourself condemned to your original state. Our contract is therefore void. I render you back your vows; be you equally generous, for we can never be more nearly connected than at this moment.'

"'Tis well, Ellen,' I replied. 'I thank you for this early proof of your prudence. Some time hence, had we been united, it might have given me pain. That I am not the son of Monteith, you are well informed; but you must seek another father for me than M'Crae, to whom I owe in truth some great obligations, though not of the filial kind, and of which I commend you to require an explanation from Lady Roskelyn.'

"The coolness with which I spoke astonished and confused her.

"'If,' said she 'you are not the son of M'Crae, why not declare it? Cast back the reproach where 'tis due, and openly reveal your family.'

"'Whatever secret reasons appeared strong enough to induce the noble Monteith to adopt me, might surely, in a bosom interested in my favour, announce that he deemed me at once worthy his name and fortune, but never shall either be prostituted to purchase a hand without a heart. Monteith rejects that which would be denied to St Clair M'Crae. Your vows are again yours, lady, and my heart shall be mine own until it meets a more disinterested partner.'

"Ellen, no doubt, had prepared herself for supplications and abject submission; she was, therefore, at once disappointed and vexed.

"'The Lord of Roskelyn,' said she, 'with manly openness, woos me for his bride, and can you suppose I will offend my father, and cast from me rank and affluence for one who, wrapped in mystery, refuses the explanation I ask?'

"'I do not desire it,' replied I; 'but remember this truth, Ellen—however you may be the *nominal*, you will never be the *real* countess of Roskelyn!'

"Our discourse was considerably longer, but all to the same purport, for however I suffered internally, I appeared to bear it unmoved, until at length we parted for the night.

"On informing my friends what had passed, and that I resolved to bear Ellen back the ensuing morning, they applauded the measure, and lest we should meet with any disagreeable encounter in the performance of our design, Hamilton and Ross collected fifty of their vassals, who dwelt at a short distance—and thus prepared, all was ready at day-break.

"Ellen soon after appeared. She was more calm, but sullen, and. taking some slight refreshment, mounted the horse provided for her. I begged two of my friends to attend on each side her beast, and for myself, I rode first, and led the cavalcade.

"Towards evening we reached the castle, and sounding the horn, the gates were opened, and I demanded to speak to Sir David.

"The old man, accompanied by Lady Roskelyn, and surrounded by his vassals, immediately attended. The Lord Roskelyn, I found, was confined by his wound. I first spoke.

"'Sir David,' said I, "I come to crave your excuse for the warmth of yesterday. I laboured under a mistake that I would you had suffered your daughter to rectify, without obliging me to have recourse to violence. I, however, return her safe, as she herself can testify.'

"'Say, Ellen,' said Sir David, 'doth he speak truly? Do I receive thee safe, my child?'

"'From personal violence I have escaped,' replied she, with bitterness, 'but have been treated with insolence, contempt, and disrespect.'

"'How, I pray you, fair maid?' answered I. 'You first condemned me unheard, and then asked questions I did not choose to answer, but referred you to the Countess of Roskelyn. Say, lady, did I not well? Our private history is not for all ears.'

"The anger of Lady Roskelyn at this speech exceeded all bounds. 'Villainous deceiver!' exclaimed she, 'the kingdom of Scotland shall not hold thee and me; at the foot of the throne of James the First will I cry aloud for justice on thee.'

"'At the foot of the altar, lady, though not much used to pray, will I entreat, not for justice, but for pardon for you, lest at the throne of a greater Sovereign than James we should be doomed to separate kingdoms to all eternity. A few words more, and I have done. Beat at your breast, and awaken sleeping nature! Repent, and I will predict the path of rectitude will restore what, I am convinced, for many years hath been a stranger to you—peace and security. For you, Ellen,' continued I, turning to her, 'I leave you in the road to wealth; I wished to have led you into that of happiness, but I knew not that you were venal enough to be purchased. But I thank you; you tore off the mask in time, and I resign you without a sigh.'

"As I concluded, I hastily remounted my horse, and left the court of the castle where this conference had taken place.

"Though I had hitherto borne all highly, love and vengeance at once distracted my bosom. In three days a burning fever raged in my veins, and, for fourteen more, confined me to my bed. My senses restored, I blushed at my folly, and resolved not to let my enemies triumph in my weakness. Accompanied by my constant friends, I crossed to France, where we passed some months, and where I recovered sufficiently to assume the appearance, if not the reality, of tranquillity.

"While in Paris I received letters from Sir Alexander M'Gregor, informing me and my friends that a criminal suit had been entered against us by Sir David Stuart, for forcibly carrying off his daughter (now wedded to the Earl of Roskelyn). There was likewise against me a second complaint by the Dowager of Roskelyn and her son. It set forth that I, in connection with a low-born man named M'Crae, by falsehood and unlawful arts, had practised and wrought upon the weakness of the late chieftain Monteith, and so far beguiled him as at length to persuade him to make me heir to his possessions; praying to have his will annulled and made void; and that also an injunction might be issued, forbidding me, on the highest penalties, any longer to use a name I so highly disgraced.

"We lost no time, but hastened home. The Parliament was held at Perth, where we surrendered, to answer the crimes alleged against us.

"The appointed day arrived. The king and some of the first nobles sat as our judges. My having been favoured by the Duke of Albany, without another cause, would have been sufficient to condemn me; but my enemies did not trust to that, for my judges were the picked friends of the houses of Stuart and Roskelyn.

"Myself and my companions were brought forward, and Sir David's accusation first preferred. I was sentenced to a fine of six hundred marks; my companions to one of a hundred each. Such was the result of the first accusation. On the second, which took place on the ensuing day, I stood alone as a culprit; but my constant friends were as near me as possible.

"The Dowager of Roskelyn first gave in her testimony against me. She recapitulated the arts used by M'Crae, his wife, and myself, in order to ingratiate me in the favour of the late chief, to the detriment of her (his sister), and of his nephew, the present Lord of Roskelyn.

"John of Roskelyn's complaint was but the echo of his mother's.

"In answer to these accusations, I now held myself free to declare all I knew, and which I corroborated by the testimony of friar Thomas, and the oaths signed by M'Crae and his wife. The paternal affection of the chief was also testified by my friends; but nothing appeared to throw guilt on so fair a fame as that of the Dowager of Roskelyn. The oaths of M'Crae and his wife were merely regarded as fabricated to deceive the chief, and the asseverations of Friar Thomas treated as a gross and purchased deceit. In short, I was condemned to surrender all that the chief had bequeathed me, to relinquish his name, and be outlawed for life to the Western Isles."

Randolph, whose heart beat high at the recital of his father's wrongs, could bear no more, but starting up, exclaimed—"Now, shame and disgrace be mine if I follow not that Lord Roskelyn through the world!"

Though pleased with the affection the heart of Randolph bespoke, Monteith replied, with marked earnestness—"Randolph, my arm is yet strong enough to defend itself; but, note me well, if thou attemptest aught against the Lord of Roskelyn, my curse will rest on thee."

Randolph started and looked astonished, but made no reply.

"Remember," continued Monteith, with more gentleness, "that he is my brother—the same blood purples our veins—one mother bore us; and be assured, the time will yet come when thou wilt see her, unforced,

do justice. Have I not already my revenues restored? and I have no doubt time will accomplish the rest."

"Pardon me," replied Randolph. "They must love a father less than I do, who can hear of such oppressions unmoved."

"I thank thee, my generous boy. Thou thinkest with the warmth of youth; I begin to judge with the coolness of age. I pity the Lord of Roskelyn: he hath already his punishment. But to proceed.

"The sentence was no sooner pronounced than I was commanded to deliver up my sword; for, as I had voluntarily surrendered, it had not been taken from me.

"To be disarmed was a disgrace I did not choose to submit to.

"'My sword,' said I, with heat, 'belonged to my ever-honoured and lamented uncle, the chief of Monteith, and never will I resign it.'

"'Yield the sword,' repeated the king. 'If it belonged to the chief Monteith, it now appertains to the Earl of Roskelyn; therefore to his hands resign it.'

"John of Roskelyn, with visible exultation, advanced towards me. I took no time for reflection—my passions were my masters; and had even James himself at that moment come in contact with me, I had acted the same: I seized Roskelyn, and threw him with violence from me.

"'Dastard knave!" exclaimed I, 'learn thy distance. Did I think my blood of the quality of thine, I would seek to prove it bastard. Earn the sword of Monteith,' continued I, unsheathing it. 'To gain it thou must take a life.'

"Alas! my passion involved my friends in my misfortunes. Drawing my weapon appeared the signal for all to do the same, and the hall of justice in a moment became a scene of confusion. The courtly moths instantly fluttered round the torch of royalty as though we meant to extinguish it; and the cry of 'Treason! treason!' in voices rendered by fear shrill as those of women, echoed through the court.

"A detachment of soldiers immediately rushed in, with Sir Duncan Keith at their head. The veteran had served with my uncle, and I was well known to him. His party surrounded us, and a parley ensued, when we were all ordered to resign our weapons—a command we refused to obey.

"'Never,' exclaimed I, 'shall it be said that the pupil of the gallant Monteith laid down his sword at the command of a tyrant. Should I act so unworthily, truly should I prove myself an alien to his name and blood. To the name of Roskelyn I resign all claim; and, so help me, Heaven, if I would not sooner be for ever M'Crae than take the accursed title, if I were to resemble those who now bear it.

"A cry to wrest our weapons from us was again repeated, and again we persisted to die with them in our grasp. Among the soldiers we had all been universally beloved, so that, though they surrounded us, no attempt was made to annoy us. Sir Duncan Keith, approaching the king, spoke to him in a low voice, but with much energy, to which he at length answered, though with heat—

"'Act as you please;' or words to that import.

"Sir Duncan then advancing towards us, said—'I grieve to see men, heretofore so warmly attached to their country and king, so far forget themselves as to have recourse to such desperate measures. Ye are but five, and your lives would be only the sacrifice of a moment; yet, through

an unwarrantable pride, ye would sooner lose them than obey the commands of your sovereign. For me, I set the example of peace; I sheathe my sword, and order my soldiers to do the same.'

"Sir Duncan, as he spoke, replaced his weapon in the scabbard, as did also his men—an example that was instantly followed by myself and friends; and, without further contention, we were committed to his care, at the common guard.

"The whole country expected that our punishment would have been nothing less than death; but if the mercy of James did not spare us, the prudence of his ministers prevailed, and, after much deliberation, we were all condemned to banishment in the island of Barra; but my estate alone was decreed forfeit, according to the former sentence.

"A strong detachment of soldiers escorted us to our destination in the tower of M'Leod, where we found a garrison of twelve men, placed there as our guard.

"Here our conductors left us; and we had not been landed a week, before my old comrades and friends, who had heard of my disgrace, came from every quarter. Our guard appeared inclined to show us their power, but, with some little assistance, were soon silenced and disarmed, after which we put them on board a vessel, and sent them back to Scotland.

"As we remained perfectly quiet, no notice was taken of this affront until the ensuing year, when a larger party was sent. These we disposed of in the same manner, making them the bearers of this message—That, left to ourselves, we were disposed to peace, but would not quietly submit to masters.

"Some trifling efforts were afterwards made to subject us, but, failing of success, they were discontinued; and here ends my history till I met my Ambrosine."

CHAPTER XXX.

The ensuing afternoon, in terms passionate as the effusions of a first affection, did Monteith relate the course of his love for Ambrosine, which Randolph but imperfectly knew.

Monteith then minutely recapitulated every event until the time he and his friend were surprised and made prisoners. "Our business being concluded," continued he, "we departed from Benbecula, in order to return to Barra. The party consisted only of Sir James Ross, myself, and the men we took to navigate our vessel.

"We had not long left the island when we observed a ship under Danish colours right in our course. Though the wind was fair she appeared to sail heavily and make no way. When we drew near her, a great confusion appeared on board, and, on being hailed by our men, they replied their vessel had sprung a leak, and that, not having a sufficient number of hands to keep the water from rising, it gained upon them very fast; they, therefore, implored our assistance.

"Their claim on our pity and succour was too strong to be denied. Ross, myself, and one of our men, leaped on board, leaving our swords in our own vessel. Two of the Danes led the way to the hold; but we were no sooner between decks than we were surrounded by ten armed men, who sprung upon us, saying we were prisoners. Sir James and

myself instantly drew our dirks, and wounded three of the assailants; we were, however, soon overpowered by numbers and disarmed. Thus, Randolph, I lost the dirk that gave thee such alarm.

"Raging almost to madness, I demanded for what purpose this treachery was practised; but they carefully evaded answering all questions, only saying, that no further violence was intended, unless they were compelled to it by any attempt to regain our liberty.

"They then left us under a guard of six men, while some of them forced the men that remained on board our vessel to enter theirs. We were soon after informed by the leader of the villains, whom I afterwards knew to be M'Lellan, that our destinations were different; Sir James and the men being designed for Denmark, while myself and six of the perfidious crew were to be landed at Ardnamurchan. Not till I received this intelligence did I suspect the house of Roskelyn to be concerned in this dark transaction; but this at once unravelled the mystery, and led me to suspect that murder was to conclude the business.

"Opposition and complaint were useless. To Ross, who I trusted would at some future period reach the island, I commended my wife and children; and, after having embraced, we separated.

"Re-embarking on board our own vessel, the Dane left us; and with my six guards only, I reached the destined port. On landing we walked some miles over a lone and desolate tract when we reached a cottage, which was that of M'Lellan, where we found only an old woman, and two more of the crew.

"After being detained here over the night, in the evening of the following day I was taken from the cottage; and towards midnight we reached the Castle of the Valley, which I judged, from its lonely situation, to be intended for my prison or the scene of my death. Sir David had been dead some years, and that domain, with its small revenues, had fallen to the Lady Roskelyn.

"On our entrance I saw no one but the old porter at the gate, M'Lellan leading the way to the hall, where I expected at least to find the whole family assembled, but was much astonished to see only the countess.

"Though many years had elapsed since I saw her, her beauty was yet dazzling, but no trace of that innocence which first caught my heart remained; her manners were bold and assuming, and the only expression of her eye, pride and contempt.

"On our entrance into the hall, she ordered the guard to retire.

"'Is it possible,' said she, her eyes sparkling with malicious joy, 'that the valiant and undaunted St Clair, who sets kings at defiance, and laughs at their power, should be conquered by a woman? Revenge is now mine, and canst thou expect mercy?'

"'I neither ask nor expect it,' I replied, 'and would sooner perish than receive a favour from thee.'

"'Remember,' said she, passionately, 'that thou art in my power; and let thy knowledge teach thee prudence, lest I be tempted to use it.'

"'Do so; call in thy myrmidons—they are worthy of their employer; but where is John of Roskelyn? Is he sunk so low as to delegate thee to transact this business?'

"'Neither John of Roskelyn nor his aspiring chaste mother have to claim aught in this enterprise; 'tis my own, and I glory in it. I pursued the means, and have accomplished my purpose.'

"'True, you have, by fraud and meanness; what is to follow?'

"'That, even by myself, is undetermined. Meanness, I deny; and stratagem was necessary. The brave and wise do not always attack a lion openly, but sometimes entangle him in a net, or foil him in a trap.'

"Much more discourse of the same tendency passed between us, but to no purpose, except increasing the bitterness on both sides, until at length, she rose in great heat, and going to the door of the hall, called M'Lellan, who immediately obeyed the summons, I was conducted to the watch-tower, and a guard set over me.

"During the time I remained a prisoner, I saw the countess several times. My food was regularly served, and good of its kind, and an idea I at first had, that they meant to poison me, insensibly wore off; but imprisonment, and the anxiety of my mind in respect of my wife, children, and friends, insensibly preyed on my spirits, and would inevitably have destroyed me, had not Heaven sent succour in the person of our beloved Randolph.

"My liberation you well know; I shall therefore conclude with saying, that, though I trust the lesson I have received will not harden my heart. it will teach me to give a moment of reflection before I act.'

"Dear father, I thank you," said Randolph, as Monteith concluded; "what the countess's future intentions were respecting you, I cannot conjecture; murder I think it could not be, or she would not so long have delayed it."

"It hath been agreed in all ages," replied Monteith, laughing, "that woman's actions are frequently impenetrable; if so, we in vain endeavour to discover the source of hers; perhaps also, they were undetermined."

"Thank Heaven, it is over," replied Randolph.

Monteith's narrative ended, Randolph, Phillippa, and James set out for a ramble, and others of the party followed, until Ross, Hamilton, M'Gregor, De Bourg, Monteith, and his wife were left to themselves.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"By my life," said De Bourg, as soon as they were alone, "but Randolph's question was to the purpose. What the countess's future intentions were toward you, I cannot conjecture; murder, I am convinced, it could not be."

"De Bourg," replied he, "to my friends I have no concealments, nor, indeed, should I, to any of our comrades, after the many instances I have had of their attachment, and the sincere proof of their secrecy in respect to Randolph; but the truth is, I have a story to disclose, which for worlds I would not have known to that youth, as hereafter, when informed of his real birth, it would cover him with shame. What I shall relate, I pray you let ever remain a secret in your own bosoms: Randolph already knows too many of the ill qualities of the countess, for shame to be added to the account, when he learns that she is his mother.

"On the second night after my arrival at the castle, I was again conducted to the hall, where, as before, I found the countess. Her manners were less haughty, and she entered into conversation with a freedom that astonished me.

"'Monteith,' said she, 'thou hast laughed at my weakness and derided my power; I was therefore resolved to convince thee that I was not so insignificant an enemy as thou thoughtest. Neither the dowager nor Roskelyn know of this enterprise; and, by the blessed saints, I mean thee no personal injury.'

"'Then why detain me here?' replied I.

"'Didst thou not detain me,' said she, 'in a worse place, and where my virgin fame might have fallen a sacrifice?'

"'To my shame I confess it; but no advantage was taken of thy situation.'

"'No. Thou offeredst to wed me at the first church in our way; was it not so?'

"'It was; but what doth this recapitulation of follies tend to?'

"'Thou seest my memory yet retains the circumstance, though so many years have elapsed."

"'More happily forgotten than called to remembrance."

"'I think not so. St Clair, thou wert even then a better warrior than a wooer, or thou hadst not taken a maiden's answer so hastily.'

"I stood in silent astonishment. After a short pause, she continued—'To look on thee, Monteith, no one would conclude outlawry a severe punishment, for thou art scarcely changed. What thinkest thou of me? Either the world flatters, or I still retain some of the charms that caught thy heart at Dumfries?'

"'My taste in beauty is changed,' replied I coldly; 'I am therefore no judge.'

"'A wife of sixteen years cannot blind thy sight; I know mankind better. No one can blame thee for marrying the heiress of Kintail; but, St Clair, even then thy heart was never hers.'

"'Were a man to avow that falsehood,' replied I warmly, 'I would proclaim him a liar.'

"The countess reddened, but appeared to struggle to suppress her passion. 'I but intrude upon you with my folly,' said she; 'would you wish to retire?'

"'I would wish first,' answered I, 'to know why I am detained here. I have injured no one, particularly you; if you suppose I have, point out the remedy.'

"'Monteith,' replied she, rising and laying her hand on my arm, while her eyes were strongly fixed on my face, 'canst thou point out a remedy for my father's folly, thine own pride, and my infatuation, which fixed me for life in splendid misery?'

"I felt like one struck with lightning. 'Lady,' replied I, recoiling from her touch, ''tis natural that fathers should wish their children great. For my pride, as you call it, let it be ever forgotten; your refusal hath been productive of such happy consequences to me, that I shall for ever revere and bless the occasion; and for infatuation, there could be none in a connection that gave you an adoring husband and children, one of whom, I am convinced, will stand forth hereafter unrivalled in honour.'

"'You know not John—he is the counterpart of his father; and for Matilda, though at present gentle, unassuming, and affectionate, her character is not yet fixed. To love the children, Monteith,' continued she with energy, 'it is necessary to esteem their father.'

"'I can be no judge,' said I, 'in affairs of this nature; but the com-

bined honour of the houses of Roskelyn and Stuart will doubtless lead you in a more proper path than can be pointed out by Monteith, or, if you please, by M'Crae, the outlaw.'

"'Perish the name,' said she, 'and with it the accursed phantom pride that ever fixed me a Roskelyn! St Clair,' added she with softness, 'thou once said thou wishedst to lead me in the path of happiness. Is the road for ever barred? Can it never more be open to Ellen?'

"'I trust it may. But I intrude on your patience: I will retire.'

"'Say, rather, I intrude on you. Is it possible that the man who hath so often sworn everlasting love and truth to me alone, should be so insensible to my happiness?'

"I turned from her with disgust, and approaching the door, called aloud upon M'Lellan, ordering him to lead the way to the tower.

"The countess remained in silent rage; M'Lellan obeyed; and thus ended our second conference.

"We had, after this, several conferences. At times she was calm and soothing; at others, the natural bent of her disposition predominated, and she threatened to give me up to the dowager and her son. My conduct was, indeed, more calculated to increase than to assuage her anger: and I have no doubt but that a secret death would have concealed her shame and my imprisonment, had not Randolph and our friends released me.

"I weary myself in repeating the extravagances of this woman. Suffice it, they were all of the same purport, either raging with passion and revenge, or, in her milder moments, offering me liberty on condition of being my companion.

"The last three weeks, however, her conduct was more reserved and thoughtful; and, no doubt, her mind was employed how to dispose of me that her disgrace might never be discovered. She may, however, rest in security. Never again will I shame myself by the recital; and, for Randolph's sake, let us, if possible, bury her frailties in oblivion."

"Willingly on my part," said Ross; "for the only injury I sustained in the business, save my fears for you, were a few days of hunger."

CHAPTER XXXII.

While peace, health, and harmony reigned among the inhabitants of the rude and uncultivated coast of Barra, sorrow, disease, and death visited the gilded chambers of the castle of Roskelyn; for, after the escape of Monteith from the power of the countess, her vexation and despair were in some measure diverted into another channel, by a messenger arriving to inform her that her son lay at the point of death, from an epidemic fever.

To the great joy of Jean, she departed on the ensuing day, but reached the castle only in time to hear the groans of her agonized lord, and the cries of his mother, who, two hours before her arrival, had witnessed the death of the heir to their vast possessions. Though the countess possessed none of the tender feelings which distinguished a mother, the death of her son gave a blow to her consequence, which made her at once weep for him and for herself. Should her lord likewise die, an event she

before was regardless of, the loss of her son had placed an inseparable bar to her future power.

The death of Lord John sat heavily on the heart of his father; but yet more so on the dowager, who, now approaching to sixty, began to find that her days were numbered, and that a review of her past life afforded no consolation either for the present or for the future. For the son's wife, she loved her not. Even their similarity of disposition made them foes; for, both haughty, vindictive, and overbearing, neither would yield sway to the other. No sooner, therefore, were the rites of the church performed, and the dead youth deposited with the ashes of his ancestors, than the dowager retired to an estate she had in the vicinity of Stirling, and there alone brooded over her sorrows.

Not so the countess. A short time removed from her even the semblance of sorrow; and her lord, still a slave to the fascination of her charms, again submitted to the yoke of her tyrant spirit.

Fearful lest he, by some other means, might learn the capture of Monteith, she herself informed him of it, and also of his subsequent flight; but the motive she gave for her conduct was far wide of truth. Vexed, she said, at being at variance with her lord, she was resolved to show him that his interest was still dear to her, by seizing his greatest enemy, whom she meant to resign to him, had she not been disappointed by his escape.

"Right glad am I that he did so," replied the earl; "the estate of Roskelyn is enough for me. By will he is truly my uncle's heir. And for some cause we are afflicted: let us tempt the anger of Heaven no further."

Whatever were the intentions of the countess, who still languished for revenge, she, for the present, concealed her rancour, and seemed to act in perfect acquiescence with her lord.

The first gust of grief passed, the Lord Roskelyn formed a plan for visiting England—a scheme that entirely met with the approbation of the countess, as it would enable her to display that grandeur which constituted the whole of her happiness.

Lord Roskelyn's motives were different. He had spared no pains or expense, many years before, and had even sent messengers over the neighbouring kingdom, to make enquiry after his son, but all without effect; and though he could not flatter himself with being more successful, yet he resolved to make the trial, were it only to divert his mind from the loss he had recently sustained.

During their absence, Lady Matilda was to be placed with the dowager; and all being prepared, with a splendour befitting the countess's wishes, six months after their son's death, they took their way to England.

In the meantime Monteith was informed by Sir Alexander M'Gregor of all that had passed. He did not rejoice at the death of his enemy's child, but he plainly foresaw that whenever he choose to bring Randolph forward, he would be received as the immediate gift of Heaven.

Three years passed, which completed the manly person of Randolph. Tall and well formed, his body was strong and active, and his features such as at once commanded esteem and respect; while his temper, not to disgrace so fair an exterior, was brave, noble, generous, and humane. The friends of his youth were still beloved with the same ardour; but

his partiality for Phillippa was still more evident, and such as could not have failed to have given pain to Monteith and his wife, had they not foreseen from it the most flattering consequences.

The graces of Phillippa also began to be known far beyond the narrow bounds of Barra, while she herself, like the unconscious rosebud, bloomed only among the kindred of her parent tree, nor wished to diffuse her charms beyond it.

In the youthful James and St Clair, Monteith could not fail to retrace his own boyish days; the same person, the same character, distinguished them.

The rude wind and a threatening sky one evening having forced a small vessel to seek shelter in the haven of Vatersa, the crew and passengers came on shore, when one of the latter asked several questions respecting Monteith and his family, of whom, he said, he had heard much, and that he should have thanked rather than lamented the storm, had it brought him to the knowledge of one he was so anxious to see.

"Marry, master," replied one of the islanders, "and he would have made you right welcome, for he hath a princely spirit; so, in faith, have they all; for, as we say in the islands—'Go to Barra sad, ye will come back glad.' Not a nobler heart ever beat in a human bosom; and, for his wife and children, they are the flowers of the country; I'll be bold to say, all Scotland cannot match the lads; then, for the Lady Phillippa, kings might stake their crowns for her good will."

"My good fellow thou inflamest my curiosity. Is there no way to reach the island? the distance is short."

"Not more than two miles to the tower of M'Leod; and if so be that thou art willing, I have a stout sea-boat, that shall safely carry you."

"I thank you, and will accept your offer." So saying, he gave a piece of gold to the islander, who prepared his boat, which the stranger entering, with two of his followers, they soon reached Barra.

"Now, my friend, I must further trouble you to greet the chief from me. Say that a stranger from the Orkneys, Lord of Ronaldsa, prays his hospitality this rough night."

"Marry will I; but, were you not a lord, he might perhaps like you better; for he hath had some scurvy tricks played him by some of your brethren; yet, as you are an islander, that may make a difference."

"I trust it will; bear ye the message—I will here wait your return."

The islander immediately hastened to the fortress, where he had no sooner delivered his message, than St Clair sent Randolph and James to bid the stranger welcome.

Of the outlaws of Barra the Lord Ronaldsa had heard much; but his expectation fell far short of the reality, for he found men whose understanding would have bettered the councils of their country, whose manners might have graced its courts, and whose skill and bravery would have led its armies to conquest.

His own disposition was noble and courteous; he therefore soon conciliated the friendship of his hosts, and the evening passed gaily. At supper they were joined by the Lady Ambrosine and Phillippa, the former of whom repeated his welcome with a grace that he had seldom witnessed.

The repast ended, the wife of Monteith, at her husband's request, took

her harp, as Phillippa did her lute, which accompanying with their voices, the Lord of Ronaldsa exclaimed in a rapture—"By Heaven, I would give half my lands to be an outlaw among ye; when James the First sent ye hither, he doomed ye to paradise, not to punishment."

"How can it be otherwise," replied De Bourg, bowing to Ambrosine and her daughter, "when we dwell with angels."

"True," said Monteith, laughing; "but he sent no angels with us; they were the gift of Heaven."

"Would to fortune, then," answered the chevalier, "that Heaven had been more bountiful in the number!"

Ambrosine again tuned her harp and sung, as did also Phillippa, with Randolph and her brother James, till near midnight, when Ambrosine rising, said—"The night is far spent, and our noble guest, from the fatigues of the day, must be weary."

"Lady," replied he, "when I came hither this evening, I thought I was so; but ye possess the power of turning pain to pleasure; for I never felt less fatigue in my life than at the present moment."

Ambrosine bowed, and, with her daughter, retired, while Monteith attended his guest to his chamber, and wished him good repose.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

For some days the weather proved stormy—a circumstance the Lord Ronaldsa was not sorry to profit by, to prolong his stay at Barra. Young, rich, and uncontrolled master of himself, he felt a strong predilection for the inhabitants of the fortress, and most particularly for Phillippa; so that he seized the opportunity to entreat the interest and consent of the chief and Ambrosine to address their daughter.

Both Monteith and Ambrosine gave their consent, but, in doing so, said that the decision of their daughter would be theirs. Ambrosine agreed to break the matter to Phillippa, and accordingly next morning did so. She found, however, that her daughter was very determinedly set against the proposal, and had just got her final refusal when Monteith entered the chamber—"If I do not intrude upon you," said he, "I come to inquire whether you have consulted Phillippa on the business of yesterday?"

Phillippa turned away her blushing face in silent confusion.

"I have," answered Ambrosine; "and before she knew the Lord Ronaldsa's offers, she decked him with every grace and virtue; those once known, she stripped him again so completely that not a vestige of either remained. In short, he suits not her fancy; she will no husband that doth not resemble thee or Randolph."

"I grieve, Phillippa, thou dost not see this young lord with the eyes I wish," said Monteith, "for I truly believe him as virtuous as noble; and we should take care to be assured he was truly so, before we entrusted the happiness of our child to his keeping. Reconsider this business—there is no haste; I should joy to bestow thee on a brave and noble husband."

"Not on him, dear father!" exclaimed she; "I wish to live and die with you."

"My love," replied Monteith, "marriage is a duty which we owe to our families and to society. Should Heaven please to remove thy mother and me, thou wilt need protection, and the securest asylum for a young and virtuous woman is the arms of a beloved and affectionate husband."

"The saints forbid that I should live to see that day!" replied she; "but should it be so, dear father, have I not brothers? Randolph would sooner perish than let any one offend me."

"The die is cast," said Monteith, in a low voice, to his wife; "heaven bring it to a happy issue!" Then turning to his daughter, he added—"We love thee too well, Phillippa, to do more than advise in this business. I shall truly return to the Lord of Ronaldsa thy answer; but though thou canst not see him as a lover, remember he is my friend."

Phillippa promised obedience: and kissing her parents, begged leave to retire.

"The die is indeed cast, as thou observest," said Ambrosine to Monteith. "Never, as I should judge, will that dear child love any other than Randolph."

On leaving her parents Phillippa hastened through the gallery of the fortress to her chamber, but, in the midway, was met by Randolph. In the confusion of the moment, she would have passed; but accosting her, he said—"My dear sister, you are in tears; tell me, I conjure you, the cause; are you ill, or has aught happened to our parents or friends?"

"No; I am not quite well—something hath vexed me; I shall be better speedily. I will retire to my chamber, and collect my spirits."

"Tell me first what has agitated thee thus? Nay, I will know," added he, detaining her. "Thy eyes are swollen with weeping."

"Nothing: a trifle not worth thy knowing."

"Then why so cautiously conceal it?"

Phillippa blushed. "The Lord Ronaldsa—" said she, hesitating.

"Speak—what of him?" said Randolph, impetuously.

"He hath—nay, I shame to tell thee——"

"Shame to tell me!" replied Randolph; "shame to tell me!" repeated he; "for Heaven's sake, speak; thou distractest me!"

"The Lord of Ronaldsa hath vexed me to death."

"Then will I vex him to death," loosing her garment, which he before held, and grasping his sword. "Sorrow light on him. Is this a requital for my father's hospitality?"

As he concluded he attempted to quit her, but, snatching his tartan, she said—"Thou art too hasty, and misconceived me. Lord Ronaldsa hath done nothing worthy thy anger."

"Nothing worthy my anger!" repeated he. "Why, didst thou not say he hath vexed thee to death, and did I not see thy tears? Thou triflest with me, Phillippa."

"No, on my life; but it is so awkward to tell thee that—that he hath—"

"What hath he done or said?" interrupted Randolph, impatiently.

"He hath had," replied she, blushing, "the impertinence to—"

Randolph snatched his tartan from her grasp, and was again hastily leaving the gallery, when, running after him, she added, "To ask my father's consent to make me his bride."

"To make thee his bride! his bride, didst thou say?" his hand falling

from his sword, and stopping short, as if recalled to sudden recollection, "His bride, I think thou saidst?—nothing more?"

"Nothing more!" repeated she. "Was not that enough, that he should wish to take me from—my parents?"

Randolph paused. "Dear sister," at length said he, "what did they say to the offer?"

"They wished me to love him, but I could not; and so, with their usual tenderness, they excused me."

"They are indeed kind; but the Lord of Ronaldsa is both handsome and a gallant man."

"I care not what he is, so he leaves us speedily. Dost thou, too, wish me to wed this strange man? Fie upon thee, Randolph! I thought thou lovedst me better.

"I love thee a thousand times more than myself, dear Phillippa; but, though I never before reflected on the subject, thou must sometime marry, and I should therefore wish to see thee the wife of a noble and good man, which the Lord of Ronaldsa is said to be."

Phillippa's tears again flowed. "What necessity is there," said she, "that I should wed at all? Can I not live with my parents and brothers all my life? But thou, selfish Randolph, art afraid I should be troublesome to thee. Thou also, I suppose, must sometime marry; then thou wilt think no more of thy sister."

"When I cease to think of thee, I shall cease to think at all. Dry thy tears; our parents will never wish thee to wed against thy liking. As to the Lord of Ronaldsa, he will leave as soon as the weather permits."

"I will pray for a favourable wind," answered she; "not that I bear him any anger, but rather good will, provided he would be kind enough not to love me."

Randolph made no reply.

"You do not speak," continued she. "Nay, then, I see you are displeased with me. It was enough to have crossed my parents, without having your anger added to it."

"Sweet Phillippa," answered he, clasping his arms about her, "I never felt displeased with thee in my life."

"Well, then," replied she, kissing his cheek, "we are friends, and I am happy. I will retire to my chamber; only remember, Randolph, should my father consult thee, take thy sister's part; for I would sooner die than wed this Lord of Ronaldsa."

Randolph promised observance, and she left him. For a considerable time after, he walked up and down the gallery with his arms folded, and in deep reflection, but seeing Monteith and the Lord of Ronaldsa on the shore, he descended and joined them.

Monteith had declined the young lord's alliance in his daughter's name, but in such gentle and palliating terms, that, though he felt grieved at the disappointment, no displeasure could be mixed with it.

As Randolph approached them, Ronaldsa said to Monteith—"Noble chief, although I cannot aspire to the happiness of being your kindred, I claim an interest in your son. I am not many years his elder; and I will love him for his sister's sake."

Randolph was confused.

"Generous lord," replied he, "I will love you for your own; my sister Phillippa is too young as yet to estimate your worth."

Monteith was pleased to see them friends, and saying all that he supposed might contribute to their mutual esteem, they walked to the fortress.

At dinner an appearance of restraint was visible in Ronaldsa, Phillippa, and Randolph, though each esteemed the other. It, however, insensibly wore off; and, towards evening, the wind proving fair, the first-named proposed to leave the island the ensuing day. Monteith insisted to the contrary; and, all conspiring to banish the recent disappointment from the mind of the guest, the evening passed agreeably.

On withdrawing to their chambers, Randolph threw himself on the bed, but instead of composing himself to rest, passed the night in a frame of mind he had never before experienced. A thousand tormenting ideas arose on his fancy and banished sleep, until the morning bell called together the residents of the fortress, and warned him to rise, when, with pale cheeks and a fevered brain, he descended to the hall.

All observed the changed looks of Randolph, but, as he denied it, remained silent; though Monteith and his wife, who both watched him narrowly, observed he did not partake of the repast, yet he evidently endeavoured, by a forced cheerfulness, to make it pass unnoticed.

The breakfast concluded, drawing Monteith aside, he said—"Dear father, may I crave a private conversation with you for a short time? I have a proposal to make, which, I trust, will meet your approbation."

Monteith assented; and leaving the party, he quitted the hall, followed by Randolph.

On entering a chamber, Monteith waited for Randolph to begin, but for a time he appeared irresolute. At length he said—"Forgive me, dearest, best of parents! but I wish to leave the fortress."

"To leave the fortress!" replied Monteith, with astonishment; "from what cause, I pray you, and that, too, so suddenly?"

"I am of an age to show myself worthy the father who gave me life, and who has rendered that life estimable by his kindness. The Lord of Ronaldsa says that a projected marriage between the young king of Scots and Mary, the niece of Charles the Bold, hath rendered the English suspicious and ripe for fresh commotions, should it take place; in which case Monteith's son hath to earn a right to the noble name he bears."

"My brave lad, thou meetest my wishes. But all is yet quiet. Should it prove otherwise, thou shalt win honour and wear it. I daily expect Sir Alexander M'Gregor. In case of war, thou shalt commence thy career under his banner."

"The Lord of Ronaldsa will leave us in a day or two; could I not, dear father, go with him?'

"Thou astonishest me. What have we done, that thou art in such haste to leave us? Till this hour I thought we were all dear to thee; but I was mistaken."

"Dear!" repeated Randolph. "Heaven knows how dear; more precious to my heart than life or liberty!"

"Then why leave us till necessity calls?"

"For the love of Heaven press not my stay. I am unworthy your affection; I hate myself."

Somewhat of the true cause struck across the mind of Monteith. "Nay, then," replied he, "thou shalt away with Sir Alexander, whom I expect the first fair wind; but till then be patient. For thy reasons I ask no more. I would be a father; not an inquisitor."

Randolph threw himself at Monteith's feet, and pressed his hand to his lips.

Monteith embraced him. "Well," said he, "now let the matter rest. I expect thy obedience in waiting for Sir Alexander."

Monteith then left the apartment, and for some time Randolph remained alone, struggling to compose his agitation, and at length succeeded sufficiently to return to the hall.

Though the weather proved clear, and the wind favourable, Monteith prevailed with the Lord of Ronaldsa to remain a few days longer, during which period Sir Alexander M'Gregor arrived. He was received with joy by the whole party, and, somewhat recovered from his fatigue, entered into a full account of the contentions which reigned through Scotland.

Livingstone, he informed them, had fallen upon the scaffold; the queen-mother was dead; and James, now eighteen, had taken into his own hands the supreme power, and consented to espouse, on the recommendation of Charles, king of France, the daughter of the Duke of Guelders —a step which would not fail to awaken the jealousy and ancient animosity of the English.

"I rejoice to hear it," answered Randolph, "as our swords will not then rust in their scabbards. Lord Ronaldsa and myself will start for fame together; and much rather would I be engaged with foreign foes, than in those civil commotions that so often distract the country."

"To your care, Sir Alexander," said Monteith, "I resign Randolph. He hath completed his twentieth year, and, eager for glory, I know not where he can sooner achieve it than under your banner."

"Right welcome shall he be," answered M'Gregor; "heretofore beloved for your sake, Monteith, and my brother's—hereafter for his own."

As the veteran spoke, he held out his hand to Randolph, who replied—"I trust I shall neither disgrace the name of Monteith nor that of M'Gregor."

"I will answer thou wilt not," replied Sir Alexander, "nor any other name, however great."

"Noble chief," said Ronaldsa, addressing St Clair, "I am a soldier of fortune: I have no father, nor warlike relative to direct my steps, Your kindness hath taught me to be intrusive. I would your noble friend would admit me to his party."

"Sir Alexander," said Monteith, "I present another petitioner, the Lord of Ronaldsa. I wished to call him son, but it cannot be. He is, however, high in my esteem, and his friendship does me honour."

"Then will his friendship do me honour also," replied Sir Alexander, taking the young lord's hand. "Monteith, we shall now only wait for thee and thy brave comrades; but as thou hast borne it nobly, shrink not now—the hour of triumph and liberty is at hand."

"My mind whispers that it is," answered St Clair: "Our hearts will, however, be with you."

The discourse now became universal, and many of the residents of the fortress, who were not detained by law, resolved to take an active part in the expected war, and for which there were already great preparations made throughout Scotland.

After supper Sir Alexander informed them that Lord Roskelyn was returned from England; that his lady and himself were at continual variance; and that, in consequence, he had refused to let the Lady

Matilda be removed from the dowager, who was said to devote herself to privacy and works of charity.

"Nay, then," said De Bourg, "let the devil mourn, lest he be cheated of his due. But fifty chapels and a hundred convents cannot obliterate her guilt. She is, however, a proof that, though sin may be passing sweet to the taste, 'tis as hard of digestion as lead."

"What think the world of the Lady Matilda?" said Ambrosine to Alexander.

"Judging from her youth," replied he, "they augur well at present; they bespeak her beautiful, gentle, and humane."

"Marry," said De Bourg, "I wonder from whom she inherited the last qualities."

"From heaven," replied Ambrosine; "all evil men have not bad children, nor all virtuous parents good ones. A wiser head than ours directs the whole. Adversity is a useful lesson; and the proud house of Roskelyn is, I hope, humbled for wise purposes. May the errors of the present possessors be buried with them, and the remembrance be effaced by the virtues of those who succeed: But, come, Phillippa, we will retire, and leave our friends to converse on their future prospects."

So saying, she rose, and bidding all a good night, left them.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Some few days after, the wind proving favourable, the whole party prepared to depart. Ambrosine bade Randolph farewell with her usual fortitude, though, as she embraced him, he felt a tear on his cheek.

"Go, my dear youth," said she, "I trust to honour and happiness. Long, long it may be ere we meet again: but remember thou hast in me a mother who hath loved thee from thy infancy, and who will ever act worthy that sacred title."

Randolph kissed her hand, and bent his knee before her.

"When I forget your goodness, may Heaven forsake me!" said he. "My sweet sister, Phillippa, is too much affected. Oh, lady, the love you bear me, transfer for a while wholly to her, and teach her, by your example, to bear an absence, however necessary, painful to me as death."

Phillippa covered her face with her hands, but no word or sound of sorrow escaped her.

"Sister," resumed Randolph, approaching her, "I pray thee speak to me. Let me bear thy good wishes with me, or I shall not prosper."

Phillippa threw herself into his arms.

"Dearest, best of brothers," said she, "would at this moment I possessed the power to add the amount of my days and happiness to the account of thine! but as that may not be, shouldst thou be devoted to the battle's rage, remember Barra and thy sister."

Phillippa would have proceeded, but her heart was too full for utterance, and she fainted on the bosom of her mother.

Monteith instantly took her in his arms, and bore her to her chamber, followed by Ambrosine; but speedily returning, and observing the strong emotion on the features of Randolph, he said gaily—

"Thank Heaven the women are gone! for a man fights but coldly

whose sword is muffled in a petticoat. Randolph, farewell! We part as men; when we meet again, I trust to see a hero."

Randolph returned his embrace; and, after clasping James and St Clair to his bosom, he followed Sir Alexander and the party from the fortress.

They immediately embarked, and the wind proving favourable, they reached the mainland in safety.

Though the wind continued fair for some time after the departure of Sir Alexander and his companions, yet, in about ten days, the sky became overcast, and the waves, vying in height with the mountains, presented a spectacle of affright and horror, from the pieces of wrecked vessels, barrels, and drowned bodies, which were thrown on the shore.

Commanding the rites of sepulture to be paid to the dead, Monteith and his companions ordered large fires to be made on the heights of the island, and, regardless of the storm, paraded the coast to discover if anything presented wherein they could be of service. On the second day they descried a small vessel, which the waves at one moment appeared to throw up to the sky, and the next to precipitate into the unfathomable abyss.

It evidently strove to reach the coast, but all efforts were unavailing; nor could the islanders afford other assistance than, by their fire and flags, pointing out the most secure parts to the land. All direction was, however, vain. The vessel was the sport of the waves, and at length struck on a rock at some distance from the island.

Though wrecked upon the most dangerous part of the coast, the humanity of the inhabitants mastered all selfish fear; and Monteith, with his companions, launching a strong sea-boat, leaped on board, and, as well as the waves would permit, steered towards them.

With infinite labour they reached the vessel, and fortunately saved the crew, consisting of five persons.

Before they again reached land, the vessel, which was a small Danish trader, went to pieces. Having moored their boat, they conducted the strangers, who appeared common mariners, to the fortress, where they ordered them refreshment, and to be conducted to rest.

Towards evening the storm began to abate; and the friends supped joyously, from the reflection that they had saved five men, who, without their efforts, must ere that have been numbered with the dead.

The ensuing morning, one of the strangers being unable to rise, St Clair visited him in his chamber, and bade him want for nothing the fortress afforded. De Bourg accompanied the chief in this visit, while Ambrosine and the rest of the inmates conversed with those that were more recovered in the hall.

The manner of the chief and De Bourg emboldened their guest to talk with freedom. A thousand times he thanked them for his preservation, and for their kindness and humanity. "Noble masters," continued he, "I am no traveller. This was my first voyage; and no wealth shall ever tempt me to make another. I took grain to Denmark, and was bringing back iron when this fearful storm beset us. By what I judge, I am in one of the Western Isles, but know not which."

"Thou art in the tower of M'Leod, in the Isle of Barra," said Monteith.

The man started. "I pray ye, good sirs, pardon me: did ye not say the tower of M'Leod?"

"I did; but why ask you?"

"Pardon me, sirs, and I will tell you; but say, is this tower inhabited?"

"Seest thou not it is?" replied De Bourg.

"Yes, truly; but many years ago I heard a prophecy respecting the tower of M'Leod, though I then knew not where it was situated."

"Did the prophecy say thou wert to be saved there?" said De Bourg, incredulously.

"No; I understand it not; but it surely alluded to higher blood than mine. It was the prediction of a seer of Roskelyn Glen, a native of the isles. My father was a vassal of that house, and we thought it not prudent to reveal it."

The curiosity of Monteith and De Bourg was raised. "What, I pray you, did he say?" enquired Monteith.

"I cannot remember the exact words, for many years are past; but myself and one of my comrades, who heard the prophecy, declared it truly at the time to the priest at Inveresk. He wrote it carefully down, and no doubt it is now in the church books: but he bade us say nothing, as God's will would be fulfilled in his own time; and that revealing it might occasion evil."

"What was the purport of it?" interrupted De Bourg, impatiently.

"The seer said," resumed the man, "that the tower of M'Leod was desolate, and only the habitation of birds; but that it soon would become the dwelling of an eagle, who, under his wings, should rear a bloody arm, on which should hang the future fate of Scotland."

Monteith and De Bourg looked at each other with astonishment. "Proceed," said the first; "what more."

"He said," resumed the man, "what I have never before dared to name, that the proud house of Roskelyn should bow, till its greatest disgrace became its highest glory. He next spoke of a dreadful and bloody battle, and was so fearfully agitated, that, by my faith, my hair raised the cap off my head."

"Is the account true?" said Monteith.

"Most true," replied the man, "or may Heaven forsake me!"

"What is your name?" said Monteith.

"My name is Donald M'Kenzie. I was then a young man; it may be some twenty-two years since, for I remember it was just before the Lord of Roskelyn wedded the daughter of Sir David Stuart."

"This matter is strange enough," said De Bourg, carelessly; "and thy companion that also heard the prophecy, is he also living?"

"He is, and even yet dwells on the estate of Roskelyn."

"This prophecy, thou sayest, is in the priest's book at Inveresk; but is it so wrapped up in mystery, that it may never be developed?"

"Truly, I should think so," answered Donald, "was it not for the truth respecting the Lord of Roskelyn's house."

"Well, haste thee to regain thy strength," said Monteith; "we will contribute something towards repairing thy losses ere thou depart."

With these words Monteith and De Bourg left him, and joined their companions in the hall, they having dismissed the mariners to the care of the domestics.

Some days after, the shipwrecked men left them, in a vessel that put into Vatersa. The inhabitants of the fortress presented each with a small sum, but to Donald a sufficiency to make up his loss.

In the meantime, Sir Alexander and his party landed safely and proceeded to Stirling, to offer their services to the young king—"I loved not his father," said Sir Alexander, "but he is gone to his account; and for this youth, the true heir of our kingdom, I will at once devote my arm and fortune. Should he hereafter prove a tyrant, I will forsake him; the fault will be his, not mine; I shall have done my duty to my country, and stand acquitted to God and my own conscience."

As they were to pass near the castle of Monteith, St Clair had prayed them to remain there a short time. The ruin and desolation that reigned around and within the noble mansion, struck them with sorrow; but Sir Alexander commanding several repairs to be made, it, before their departure, bore a more inhabitable appearance.

After a stay of fourteen days, Sir Alexander desired his party to prepare for their departure; and, on the ensuing morning, they took the road to Stirling.

Arrived within two miles of Stirling, the sound of the bugle-horn struck on their ears, and a short time after, a stag passed them, so closely pursued by the hunters, that he rushed into a wide and rapid river, and swam over. Some of the dogs followed; but even the keenest of the sportsmen checked their horses, one excepted, who rode foremost, mounted on a beautiful and spirited hunter, and who, either from want of power to curb him, or from being warmed beyond prudence in the chase, leaped down an acclivity and took the water. Sir Alexander and his party had drawn aside to give them way, and to see the sport; but their attention was in a moment directed into another channel. The hunter who had leaped into the river, scared at the rapidity of the current, yielded to it, and making a plunge, in a moment disengaged himself of his rider. The instant before a silent consternation had hung on all; but, on this sight, a universal cry of horror resounded from every quarter.

"The king! the king will be drowned!" exclaimed the whole party, rushing to the banks; but the danger repressed courage, while each looked on his fellow to offer succour. On the general outcry, Sir Alexander and his friends had approached, when, with an instantaneous movement, they saw Randolph throw himself from his horse, tear off his upper garment, and rush into the water. Again all was mute astonishment, though mingled with fear and admiration. Randolph swam with such dexterity, that soon enabled him to make a snatch at the king's mantle which, girded round him, alone appeared above water. The first effort proved vain, but the second was successful: when Randolph, finding that he had still some knowledge, said—"Fear nothing my liege—I will save or perish with you;" so speaking, he supported him above water, until a sandbank, which reached out into the river, stopped their progress, and which, by turning the current of the water, enabled Randolph, though with infinite difficulty, to make good his landing, keeping hold of the king's mantle till he succeeded in getting him on to the bank.

Randolph, though nearly exhausted, gave him all the succour in his power, so that, before the party of huntsmen, and the company of Sir Alexander had reached them, the king opened his eyes, and being wrapped in the plaids of his surrounding nobles, was borne from the spot to the first dwelling. Randolph and his companions followed, and

waited till they heard he was recovered, after which they proceeded to Stirling.

The next day, at an early hour, a messenger arrived to Sir Alexander, by order of the king, and, in his name, requested his attendance, and also that of his young friend, whose name, however, they were unacquainted with. Sir Alexander received the summons with pleasure; and, calling for Randolph, they departed with the messenger.

By the way, he informed them that the king still remained at the house to which he had been taken the preceding day, and which appertained to the Dowager Countess of Roskelyn.

Sir Alexander started at this information, while Randolph, suddenly halting, his face flushed with crimson, "Noble veteran," said he, "you will bear my duty to the king; my life, if need be, is at his command; but I cannot, with patience, see a woman who has grossly and cruelly injured my father."

"Randolph," answered Sir Alexander, "in the absence of your father, consider me in his place; were he here, his command would be obedience. You must and shall see the young king. For the dowager, think of her as you list; but remember that age, and, the world reports, repentance goad her. The labour of a life might not have placed you in so distinguished a point of view as the single act of yesterday. Who knows what Heaven may next design? The sight of a grandson may effect a revolution beyond your hope. You owe this duty to your father, if for yourself you decline it."

"Sir Alexander," replied Randolph, "you shall be obeyed. Lead on —I follow; but if I see her, it will be with repugnance and hatred."

"Pooh!" said Sir Alexander, pleased to have so easily vanquished his scruples. "She is an old woman, and not expected to move those tender passions which would flutter about your heart at the sight of youth and beauty."

"How could I avoid regarding the woman who gave birth to my honoured father, without respect and love, were she not the most abandoned and cruel of monsters?"

Again Randolph slackened his pace, and again Sir Alexander urged him with motives which he could not refute, till they found themselves at the gate of the dowager's mansion, where they were instantly admitted.

The king, informed of their arrival, ordered them to be conducted to the hall, where he sat, surrounded by the first nobles of his court, who had hastened from Stirling to pay their duty, and congratulate him on his safety. Among them were his hostess the dowager, and her granddaughter Matilda, the first of whom, even yet graceful and of noble demeanour, did the honours of her house with the dignity peculiar to herself. She well knew the partiality of the house of M'Gregor for Monteith; but this was an occasion in which the disputes of families could not occur; and as all saw in the youth, whom they supposed his son or near relative, the preserver of the king's life, she welcomed both with apparent pleasure and kindness.

Randolph, spite of his prepossession against her, could not see her without emotion. Her extreme likeness to his father, her grey hairs, and even the tone of her voice, interested him; but steeling his heart with the remembrance of her crimes, he followed Sir Alexander to the chair in which the king sat.

The young monarch was yet pale and faint, but, as they bent the knee before him, said—"Arise, I pray ye. I yesterday felt I was but a boy, while your son, Sir Alexander, proved himself a man."

"My gracious liege," replied the veteran, "the sorrow of yesterday is lost in the happiness of to-day. I rejoice in the success of my friend, but cannot claim the interest of a parent. He is not my son; but his arm and life are devoted to the service of James the Second."

"And I accept them," replied the king. "He is not your son, you say, Sir Alĕxander. That, however, lessens not my obligations to him; he must be my friend. Say, who is his father?"

"A worthy, brave, but unfortunate man, my liege; and this, his son Randolph, is entrusted to my care, to begin his career in arms in your grace's cause."

"Randolph," said the king, addressing him, "I know not how to express my thanks; but the world shall see that James the Second forgets not his gallant preserver. For the present, say how I may oblige you. Speak freely. The man here that envies your fortune is his king's enemy."

"My gracious lord," replied Randolph, "you over-rate my merit. By being suffered to serve you, my utmost ambition will be satisfied."

"Not so," replied the king; "thou art too modest. But think not," continued he gaily, "that, though I lack beard, I lack power. My enemies' power is past—it ceased with my infancy; and I will punish my oppressors and reward my friends, so that my subjects may have the alternative to choose. Say, then, Randolph—for we part not thus—what can I do to repay the debt I owe thee? My father gave me life, but thou preservedst it."

"My liege," answered Randolph, "for myself I have no wants."

"For thyself!" repeated the king. "Hast thou, then, wants for others? Speak freely: I again request—nay, command it. I taxed thy humanity highly, when thou venturedst thy life for me; tax my power to repay the obligation."

"My liege," replied Randolph, "there is a favour, but of such magnitude I dare not ask it."

Nay, I will know it. Is it the hand of a fair lady, thy superior in rank and fortune? If so, thy king can and will portion thee. Hast thou not heard I am speedily to be wedded? Thou shalt take the same day—"

"No, my liege. It is a favour dearer than life, or health, or any worldly blessing."

"Say it, then," interrupted the king impatiently.

"It is, my liege," replied he, throwing himself at the king's feet, "the liberation of my father, St Clair Monteith, and his gallant companions, Ross, Hamilton, M'Gregor, and De Bourg, all of whom now suffer under your grace's displeasure in the Isle of Barra."

"Not under my displeasure; I knew it not. But see to the Dowager of Roskelyn," interrupted he. "She faints. Bear her into the air. She looks sick to death."

Randolph involuntarily advanced some steps towards the dowager; but suddenly stopping, he yielded the charge to others who came forward to assist her.

The dowager recovered ere they bore her from the hall, and, though pale and languid, said—"I pray your grace excuse me, and continue the

discourse my weakness interrupted. My faintness is merely the tribute of age; it will speedily wear off."

"I trust it will, my noble hostess," said the king; then, turning to Randolph, he added—"Did I understand you aright? Prisoners in the Isle of Barra, and, as I should judge by their names, men of rank? On what account were they sent thither?"

"Before Randolph could reply, Sir Alexander, advancing, said—"Not prisoners, my liege, but banished men. The story is too long to relate to your grace now; but I will pledge my life upon their honour, and that you will never have cause to repent your favour."

As Sir Alexander spoke, the direction of his eye turned upon the dowager, and her emotion, which was yet strongly apparent, convinced the young king she was by some means concerned in the relation. He therefore replied—"We will hear the account at more leisure. Say, how long is it since their exile?"

"Some four-and-twenty years, my liege," replied Sir Alexander.

"The time is sufficient to expiate even a heavy guilt. At your request they are free, Randolph. Bear to them my pardon. But I expect their personal acknowledgments.

"They will pay them," replied Randolph, again throwing himself at the king's feet, and, in the moment of rapture, raising his hand to his lips. "Randolph is devoted to his king for ever," added he. "In his cause, nor difficulty, nor death itself, in its most fearful form, shall bar my passage."

The king raised Randolph, whose noble and manly appearance, rendered doubly interesting by the subject which animated him, drew forth the commendations of the whole assembly; even the dowager herself smothered a sigh, and almost repented that she could not own so gallant a relative.

"See," said the king, turning to his nobles, "that the pardon be immediately made out. Randolph will be impatient to depart. This shall be my farewell; but I trust he will not tarry. For Sir Alexander M'Gregor, if he be not more pleasantly engaged, I trust he and his friends will attend me to Stirling, where I purpose to return to-morrow."

"To the world's end, my liege," replied Sir Alexander. "Like Randolph, I am bound to you for ever."

"I thank you. Prosperous gales attend thee, Randolph! The pardon under my hand and seal, shall be sent thee forthwith."

So saying, the king rose, and the assembly broke up; Randolph returning with Sir Alexander to Stirling.

During the way, Randolph could scarcely contain his joy; he laughed, he sung, and no sooner reached their destination, than he embraced Sir Alexander—"My noble friend," exclaimed he, "to you I owe this blessing; but for your admonitions, I had declined to see the king, and thus had lost this glorious opportunity."

Sir Alexander returned his salute with equal warmth. "Randolph," replied he, "thou out-runnest my wishes:—by this brave act thou hast at once redeemed thy friends, and triumphed over the unnatural dowager; didst thou not see how her conscious heart sunk, and, for a short space, suspended the motions of life?"

"I did, and could scarcely refrain from flying to her assistance; but a momentary recollection of my father's wrongs arrested my steps, and I left her to her attendants,"

"I could," said Sir Alexander, "almost envy you being the messenger of these glad tidings to Barra; at least I shall long to participate in the general joy."

Ronaldsa and the rest of the party joined their congratulations to those of the veteran; and Frazer, who some years before had accompanied De Bourg in search of Monteith, entreating to join Randolph in his welcome errand to the island, they prepared for their departure, waiting impatiently till the pardon, properly executed, arrived.

Towards the close of the day their wishes were gratified; and unmindful of night or danger, they departed for the isle of Barra.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE young king, as he proposed, left the dwelling of the dowager the ensuing morning, and returned to the castle of Stirling, where the same day Sir Alexander, in brief terms, related the oppressions of his friend, St Clair.

The king heard him with interest and attention, but gave no decided opinion at the time, though the respect with which he treated the relater, gave him reason to augur a favourable issue.

The sight of the youth Randolph, the honour which he had gained by saving the king, his noble person, his open mien, but, above all, the filial affection he had shown for his banished father, had sunk deep into the heart of the Dowager of Roskelyn; and, under pretence of illness, she, after his departure, had retired to her chamber, entreating even the Lady Matilda to leave her to her repose. The whole of the day she secluded herself from company; but the ensuing morning, in the hall, paid the honours due to her royal guest before his departure. Left alone with the Lady Matilda, who was near seventeen, she endeavoured to collect her scattered thoughts, and, by conversing on different subjects, to divert her mind from the point to which it seemed invariably to turn. "Matilda, my love," at length said she, "you possess not your usual gaiety; either the hurry occasioned by our noble guest hath been too much for your spirits, or my sudden illness hath bereaved you of them."

"Neither, dear lady," replied Matilda; "if I am thoughtful, I am not sad; I rejoice that the king is safe; and my fears for you are vanished by seeing you well."

"You allow you are thoughtful, if not sad," replied the dowager; "from what cause are you so?"

"The vicissitudes of the last three days have afforded me room for reflection; the young king so near death; so providentially saved by this gallant stranger, who could forego every advantage to gain the liberation of his father and friends. Oh, had my brother lived to be such a man, how would my heart have swelled with delight to have heard his praises!"

The dowager turned aside and suppressed a tear, but did not speak.

Matilda, warm with the subject, did not observe her emotion, but continued—"Oh, how must his father glory in him, so young and yet so brave! While the dastard followers of the king stood trembling on the banks, he rushed in and saved him."

"Matilda," replied the dowager, "know ye not that he is the son of the most inveterate enemy of our house?"

"No, lady; he surely cannot be the son of that Monteith, or M'Crae, of whom I have heard imperfect accounts; any one may swear by his looks, his blood was right noble; yet, if he be his son—but it cannot be so; for, from what I have collected, he was an impostor."

"The wisdom of James the First," answered the dowager, "condemned his father to banishment; I should not have conjectured he could have had a son as old as this Randolph; but 'tis plain I was mistaken. By the favour of the present king, he will again come forth to distress your father and disgrace me; and, in the person of this proud boy, triumph over the heirless house of Roskelyn."

"Dear lady, I trust not; Randolph looks mild and unassuming; often have I wished to hear the whole account of his father; but my parents chid me; you perhaps will be more kind."

"You will never hear it from me, Matilda; be satisfied with what you already know; you would not surely take part with the enemies of your father?"

"Heaven forbid! I will endeavour to teach my heart to think of them with dislike and anger, unless they repent; and pray to the Virgin to turn them to friends."

"'Tis your duty to hate them," replied the dowager, with bitterness.

"Alas! I know not how; I have heard my mother talk of hatred, but cannot comprehend it. If any one offends me, I weep; but, if doing them personal injury were to gain me worlds, I could not teach that lesson to my heart. Vengeance, lady, I have read, belongs to Heaven alone; and, in its own good time, it will doubtless fall on the head of the guilty."

The dowager started—"It hath fallen!" replied she, with an involuntary emotion that alarmed Matilda. "A youth of distrust and fear, an age of despair and mingled repentance, and a death of falsehood and horror."

Matilda was shocked; but, in the innocence of her heart, attributed the dowager's emotion to another source—"Lady," replied she, "Heaven may send these cruel enemies of our house true and unfeigned repentance; in which case, hope will soothe the horrors they sustain."

"Matilda," said she, recovering her confusion, "name the disagreeable business no more; it hath been the bane of my life."

"Heaven remove it!" replied she, kissing the dowager's hand; "I pray ye, pardon me; I meant no ill; the appearance of that youth alone occasioned it."

"Matilda," said the countess, "I will retire; do thou in the meantime amuse thyself with thy lute, or ride and recruit thy spirits by air and exercise."

"I will employ my time as fancy best directs," answered she; "at dinner I trust you will be better; the guests have wearied you, and the quiet of your chamber may wear off the impression." So saying, she attended the dowager to her apartment, and afterwards retired alone to the chapel, at a short distance from the mansion.

Matilda's mind was gentle as her person was beautiful; she loved her family, but, with an understanding above her early years, internally lamented many of its errors. To the Holy Virgin, at the foot of the altar, she recommended all, praying for blessings on them, and pardon for their enemies; and, finally rising with a mind fortified with devotion, she returned to the dwelling.

In the meantime, the dowager had been a prey to the anguish occasioned by her former guilt. She paced her chamber with a hurried step and, lost in reflection, for some time, could fix her mind to no certain point. At length, throwing herself on a chair, she said, with anguish—"It is impossible—the road to rectitude is for ever closed to me. To have acknowledged my frailty at the time, however painful, would long ere this have been forgotten! and I might have descended quietly to the grave, amidst the prayers and blessings of a brave and lovely progeny, who are now doomed to think with detestation on me, and invoke curses on my grey hairs. Oh, would to Heaven that my heart in youth had not been deaf to the voice of nature, or that it had continued so for ever."

As she spoke, her eyes fixed on a portrait of her husband that hung in the chamber; warmed by imagination, she fancied he looked reproachfully on her. "Roskelyn," said she, addressing it, "couldst thou speak thou wouldst reproach me with thy heirless house."

On the entrance of Matilda, she found her grandmother still agitated; unsuspicious of the real cause, she tried to soothe her, and at length succeeded so far as to make her at least assume the semblance of tranquillity.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

RANDOLPH, accompanied by Frazer, lost no time in reaching the port of Ardnamurchan, where he engaged a ship and sailed for Barra. The evening was closed when they arrived, and they landed without being noticed by the islanders, and gained the fortress, where Randolph, snatching the horn at the gate, blew a blast so loud and shrill that the inhabitants, who were seated at supper, all started, and some instinctively laid their hands upon their swords. The alarm, however, was of short duration; for the cry of "Welcome! welcome! 'tis young Master Randolph!" resounded in a moment from every quarter.

"Randolph! impossible!" exclaimed Monteith, advancing; but before he could reach the entrance of the hall, he was met by the youth, whose mind, too highly raised by joy to admit of words, threw himself into his arms, and embraced him with such unbounded transport, that the chief almost feared his senses were deranged.

The words "Dear boy," "Good brother," "Friend," "Randolph," greeted him on every side; but, replying to none, and disengaging himself from the arms of Monteith, he tore open his breast, drew forth a parchment, and presented it to the chief.

The conduct of Randolph rendered all mute as himself with astonishment, till St Clair, starting at sight of the royal signet on the parchment, tore it open, and read:—

"Know all men by these presents, that I, James the Second, King of Scotland, being indebted to Randolph Monteith for no less than the preservation of my life, have, at his especial request, he refusing all other reward, granted to his prayers a free and unlimited pardon to his father, St Clair Monteith, and his adherents, James Ross, Allan Hamilton, James M'Gregor, and Philip De Bourg, now in banishment on the island of

Barra; restoring them to their honours, and requiring only in return their duty as faithful subjects.

Given at the Palace of Stirling, April 6th, 1448.

James the Second, King."

On hearing the pardon, the frenzied transport of Randolph appeared, in some measure, transferred to all. Some congratulated, some questioned, and others embraced him, all eager to learn the particulars of so happy an event, but their anxious curiosity defeating its purpose. Randolph, in the interim, becoming more collected, threw himself at the feet of the Lady Ambrosine, who, pressing him to her bosom, called down the blessing of Heaven upon his head. Phillippa hung on his neck, while her brothers, James and St Clair, clasped his arms; and thus, surrounded by the whole party, he found himself in the most enviable of all situations—the liberator of his family, and the benefactor of his friends.

"Father, brothers, friends," at length exclaimed he, "I am happy; my heart overflows. I would not exchange this moment for a monotonous life of a hundred years. For the first time I joy to see my mother's and sister's tears. They are tears of satisfaction. Never, never may they weep from any other cause!"

"By heaven!" said Monteith, "we love misfortune like men, but we receive joy like children."

"Prithee," said De Bourg, "dear Randolph, tell us how all this happened. The recital will restore us to reason."

"Not to-night, chevalier; I am too happy to be sufficiently collected. Be satisfied with knowing it is reality. To-morrow is soon enough for particulars."

"Not so," answered Monteith. "Like De Bourg, I shall be in a fever of expectation before to-morrow, and so will all our friends; in which case, thy story will be of no use to deaf ears."

"Frazer hath been Randolph's companion," said M'Gregor; "from him we will entreat the relation."

All joining in this request, Frazer complied, and informed them of every particular since they left Barra.

The relation ended, congratulation and praise again took place, till Randolph cut them short by reminding them that the more speedy they were in paying their duty to the king, the more welcome it would be. "For me," said he, "I will away again to-morrow. After the favour conferred upon me, I should be unpardonable to neglect any proof of attachment. We shall, I trust, meet again at Stirling."

"Not so," answered Monteith; "we will all away together. What sayest thou, Ambrosine? When canst thou be ready to depart?"

"Even when you list," replied she. "I consider myself a soldier's wife, whose duty it is to be ever ready. If the fastidious dames of the court find us a few years behind the fashion, they will laugh; but what we need in mode, we will make up in happiness; and surely the balance will be in our favour."

"The Lady Ambrosine will ever be the same," said Hamilton.

"In faith will she," returned Monteith. "The shafts of time have flown over her person with as little effect as those of confinement have over her mind, neither of which eighteen years have had the power to change."

"The courtly air hath begun to reach you already," said she; "for you flatter like prime ministers. But enough of this trifling. We will be ready when you please. You will arrange the business that may be necessary."

"I will," replied Monteith. "Our cattle, and what stock may be found here, we will leave to William, to distribute among our poorer neighbours, whom I will visit the first opportunity. For the present, the domestics of the fortress shall remain, and, as they are truly faithful, shall afterwards join us, either at Kintail or Monteith, if you be willing."

"I am pleased with the arrangement. My preparations, and those of Phillippa, will soon be made; for the present, let us retire. Randolph and Frazer need rest. We will meet early to-morrow."

In the morning all met with more calmness, and, exerting themselves in preparation, quitted Barra; William being left in trust for the islanders.

A brisk gale brought them safe to the port, whence, procuring horses, they proceeded to Monteith, where they were received as men risen from the dead by the vassals who survived, but most particularly by father Thomas, who, delighted to hear of their return, with an effort not to be expected from his years, came out at the head of the dependants to meet and welcome them.

One day given to repose, they proceeded the next to Stirling, where the king yet remained, resolved to make their duty the first object of their care.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Arrived at the palace, they were joined by Sir Alexander M'Gregor, who said he would immediately inform the king of their arrival, and return his answer respecting either, their present or future attendance. The king was seated amidst his nobles, giving audience to the ambassador of France, who brought him congratulations on his intended alliance with Mary, the daughter of the Duke of Guelders.

The business terminated, and the ambassador withdrawn, Sir Alexander, approaching the throne, informed the king that his friends were arrived, and craved leave to pay their duty.

"By mine honour," said the king, "but they have lost no time. This haste pleases me well. Let them enter; but to Randolph be the distinction paid of their introduction."

Sir Alexander obeyed; and though Randolph would fain have excused himself from the office imposed on him, he advanced first into the presence-chamber.

Reaching the foot of the throne, all bent the knee, Randolph saying—"My liege, I present my parents and friends, whose deeds more than their words will, I trust, testify their gratitude."

"I doubt it not," answered the king. "I pray ye rise. In the confusion and wars that threaten us, I cannot spare a company of such gallant men; women too," continued he, fixing his eyes on Ambrosine and Phillippa, "the fairest my eyes ever beheld. In faith, if my father had the heart to banish those, he possessed more resolution than his son will ever have to boast."

"My liege," replied Monteith, "your father had not that cruelty.

This lady," taking Ambrosine's hand, "hath been, or she flatters, a willing prisoner almost eighteen years."

"Monteith, as I should judge," said the king, "from his likeness to Randolph."

"The same, and your grace's devoted servant."

"I thank you," replied he. "Your wife and daughter then, I guess?"

"Yes, my liege."

"Eighteen years, did you say, your companion in banishment? In truth, lady, your face and form might give the lie to the world, who would never credit your being a wife at that period."

"A good husband my liege, is a preservative against wrinkles."

"Speedily do I expect my bride," said the king. "You will oblige me by gracing our court on her arrival. Lady," added he, turning to Phillippa, "she is of your age; and if she possesses but half your personal advantages, I shall be happy."

"My liege," answered Phillippa modestly, "could my wishes prevail, she should not only be the fairest, but the best of women; that she might be worthy the distinguished fate allotted her."

"I thank you." Then turning to Monteith and his friends, he added, "I crave your excuse, but the fault is in yourselves. If you wish me to pay you proper attention, bring not those magnets with you."

He then received the thanks of all with grateful ease and kindness; and entering into discourse, informed them that the English, in strong force, had committed several outrages on the borders.

"My liege," replied Monteith, "myself and friends, crave a respite of one month, after which our lives are devoted to your service. So long a banishment hath rendered us almost strangers at home."

The king acquiesced, and the court soon broke up.

The following day Ross, Hamilton, M'Gregor, and De Bourg, returned with St Clair and his family to the castle of Monteith, leaving Randolph and Ronaldsa to accompany Sir Alexander to the English borders.

The party at Monteith gave but one day to repose, when they took their way to their several domains, first agreeing to meet in the same spot as speedily as possible. St Clair's destination was Kintail and the isles, in which he was accompanied by De Bourg.

At the request of Monteith, Ambrosine, after his departure, with her children, attended the court of Stirling, where, at that period, the nobility of the whole kingdom were assembled; and among them the Lord of Roskelyn, his wife, and mother.

Though polite and gracious to all, the king particularly distinguished the family of Monteith, a distinction that caused some jealousy, but in no bosom so much as that of Lady Roskelyn, who saw, with the bitterest rancour and hatred, the triumph of her rival, not only in royal favour, but also in grace and loveliness; and surrounded by children whose youthful appearance promised to transmit to posterity, at once the dignity and valour of their father, and the sweetness and beauty of their mother.

The Lord of Roskelyn viewed them also with jealousy, but his disposition in some measure resembling his father's, savoured more of weakness than of wickedness, and deprived of the stimulant of the dowager's remonstrances, which had entirely ceased since the death of the Lord John, and, by experience, acquainted with the malignancy of his wife,

his feelings were confined to his own bosom, and caused him only, as he considered the sons of Monteith, to sigh anew for the loss of his own.

The dowager saw them with sentiments different from either; her pride disappointed by the death of her grandson, the inherent love of transmitting her honours and her name to posterity, caused a revolution in her heart, that virtue and nature had in vain striven to effect; and proudly now would she, had such a claim been practicable, at a less sacrifice than the dreadful avowal of her guilt and cruelty, have acknowledged them her lawful descendants.

"Lady," said the king to Ambrosine, "your husband I presume, is a truant from home, or we should have seen him."

"My liege," answered she, "both love and duty would have brought him hither, had he not been so; he is gone to Kintail, as are his friends to their different estates, but they will speedily return."

"Our friend Randolph is with Sir Alexander," resumed he. "In this his first campaign, your heart is not without fears on his account?"

"Hope overbalances fear, my liege: Randolph, I trust, will return with honour; 'tis time he should take an active part in the service of his country. My sons, James and St Clair, think of his departure with envy, though the father hath promised the first that he shall not long remain inactive."

"Lady," said the king, "you are worthy to be the mother of heroes, who can thus nobly devote them to the general good."

"My liege, a mother's right in her sons is secondary; the girls be mine; I will teach them those duties I endeavour to practise; but for the boys, the cares of childhood passed, their education should devolve on their father. Monteith, my lord, I trust you will find a brave man, and were his sons otherwise, I would forget the mother and disclaim them."

"If I have sons," said the king, "I would you should have the care of their infancy, lady; your understanding would make them enthusiasts in the cause of glory, and your beauty and sweetness imprint your lessons on their hearts."

Ambrosine passed over the compliment with cheerful politeness; and, the court over, returned to the apartments she occupied.

Sir Alexander and his party, in the meantime, proceeded to join Sir John Douglas, who was marching for England. Reposing within a short distance of Roskelyn, Randolph could not resist the inclination of enquiring after his friend Jean; and, taking Ronaldsa with him, as being unknown, they proceeded to the castle. On inquiry among the vassals, Ronaldsa was informed that she resided with her mother, a short distance from the castle; and, at his request, they pointed out the cottage.

This information procured, they proceeded thither, when Randolph, striking at the door, the well remembered voice of Jean bid them enter. Surprise deprived the maid of utterance; but, though her satisfaction was extreme, it was restrained by the situation of her mother, who, supported in her chair, appeared overwhelmed with sickness.

"Dear Jean," said Randolph, "I rejoice to see you; yet, if this be your mother, we meet in a sorrowful hour."

"Gracious master," answered Jean, "for you are, I now well know, of noble blood, the sight of you gladdens my heart. Dear mother," added she, turning to her suffering parent, "this is that suffering Ran-

dolph who was so kind to me when I was with the countess, and who, even now, after so long a time, hath not forgotten me."

The sight of one of whom the old matron had heard so much, appeared to alleviate the pangs she endured. "Noble sir," said she, "my thanks and blessings rest upon you; the money your goodness gave preserved life in my shattered frame longer than it would have lingered, and Jean left the countess without anger."

"I rejoice to hear it; I have not forgotten my obligations to her, though I fear, in so long an interval, she never expected to see me more."

"In truth, I did not," replied Jean, "and I grieved at it."

"The neglect was unavoidable," answered he; "I go now to meet our enemies on the English borders; and, as the event of such encounters is uncertain, resolved to see you by the way. The bounty of my parents hath enabled me to testify my gratitude; and on consulting my mother, she requests that you would henceforward consider her as your friend; and if not attached to your cottage at Roskelyn, repair to Monteith, where you shall find my words verified."

As Randolph spoke, he approached the dame, and dropped his purse into her lap. "I must not be refused," said he: "this will enable you to reach Monteith."

"You are too good," replied she, hastily; then added, "but pardon my boldness, and suffer me to look on the plaid you wear."

"Willingly," answered he; "'tis the gift of a sister dearer to me than aught in life but honour."

"A golden eagle, and the letters R. M." said the old woman; "these, then, belong to the house of Monteith, gentle sir, do they not?"

"They do; but why do you ask?" replied he.

"My gracious master, my motive is not merely curiosity. I inherited from my mother, a silken handkerchief which bears this same golden eagle, and though not the letters R. M., those of M. M., and which she came by in a mysterious manner."

Randolph's curiosity was excited, "Show it me, good dame," said he.

"Alas," replied she, "my folly hath bereaved me of it; but I will relate by what means we became possessed of it. My mother dwelt in the city of Edinburgh. She was one day fetched by a man in a sailor's habit, to attend his wife. She accompanied him; and, though the chamber was darkened, she was convinced the female was not the sailor's wife; for her linen, she could feel, was of the finest texture, and the mantle which was thrown over her was of velvet. The woman who attended her, said she was his sister; and the business ended by the birth of a boy, my mother was then dismissed, being first paid by the man.

"Previous to leaving the room, instead of her own handkerchief, she tied on one which had been thrown from the neck of the mother of the infant, and it was near a month before she discovered the theft she had unwittingly been guilty of. She then hied to the house, but the sailor and his wife were gone, nor could she gain any tidings of them; she however carefully preserved the handkerchief during her life, and at her death left it to me, thinking it might lead to a discovery of moment to some noble family."

Randolph had no doubt of the concealed person being the present

Dowager of Roskelyn, and the infant then born, St Clair. "But how did you lose the handkerchief, my good dame?" said he.

"I did not lose it," answered she. "After the death of my mother, I wedded, and my husband dying some years after, I was engaged to suckle the eldest-born of the Earl of Roskelyn, the sweet Montrose, of whom you have doubtless heard—"

"Not much," interrupted Randolph; "but to the handkerchief, dame —the house of Roskelyn interests me not, and time is short."

"In confidence, then," answered the dame, "I told the story to the young countess of Roskelyn, and she never let me rest till she obtained the handkerchief; by her eagerness to have it, I thought she guessed at the owner."

Ronaldsa reminded Randolph that their time of absence was nearly elapsed, when asking only a few minutes, he demanded of the matron whether she experienced the protection of the Lady Roskelyn. Being answered in the negative, he added, "No tie then detains you at Roskelyn; haste therefore to the castle of Monteith; ye have money for that purpose, and will there find an asylum. Relate this story to my father, or to his lady; they are better acquainted than I am with the secrets of the family, and should any inquiry into this business be necessary, they will make it. Farewell; the confusions that vex us once over, I trust we shall meet in happiness. So saying, he shook both by the hand, and, amidst the blessings of the matron and the tears of Jean, left the cottage.

Mounting their horses, they soon reached Edinburgh, and, the following morning, proceeded towards the borders.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The anger of the English, kindled by the increased friendship of France and Scotland, began now not only to threaten, but also to spread desolation. The town of Dumfries was fired, and that of Dunbar shared the same fate.

The Scots in return, under the command of Sir John Douglas, entered England, burned Alnwick, and plundered the adjacent counties.

Fresh levies being necessary to both parties, a short cessation of arms ensued; and the Scottish party, under Sir Alexander M'Gregor, returned to Stirling, where the king remained. All the nobility, unemployed in active service, flocked round the sovereign; and, among others, the family of Roskelyn, who, though vexed at the apparent partiality for Monteith, were too proud to show what absenting themselves on so public an occasion would plainly have revealed.

Monteith and his friends were not yet returned, and the Lady Ambrosine remained with the court, when, one morning, the whole city was put into consternation by the report of an army being in full march from the north.

Alarmed at this intelligence, all felt it according to their different characters, the dastardly climbing the eminences to view the danger at a distance, while the more valiant girded on their swords to repel it. Among the latter were Randolph and Ronaldsa; though both remarked the tardiness of Sir Alexander, and that the animation that usually enlivened

his features in cases of danger, went now no further than a sarcastic smile at the fears of some and the preparations of others.

"This formidable power," said Sir Alexander, "is yet at a considerable distance, and our army is prepared to meet danger, should it approach. The Lord of Ronaldsa and Randolph are both brave fellows and good horsemen. Let them away and reconnoitre this enemy, and bring us such intelligence as may enable us to meet them in a proper manner."

The king acquiesced, and the young men, pleased with the commission, departed, and, ere night fall, came sufficiently near, not only to know the number of the party that had given them such alarm, but to be informed of their destination, in a parley they held with the commanders.

Fraught with this intelligence, Randolph and his friend returned to Stirling, where they found the council assembled. Covered with dust and perspiration, the young men entered; but before either spoke, the intelligence of their features foretold their errand.

"My mind is already relieved," said the king; "the looks of both betoken good. Speak, Randolph, what is the number of this formidable power? from whence do they come? and by whom are they commanded?"

"My liege," replied Randolph, "in the front march six hundred of the vassals of Kintail and Monteith, followed by one thousand hardy men from the Western Isles, both commanded by my honoured father and the chevalier De Bourg.

"The right wing consists of five hundred men, dependants of the domain of Ross, led by their noble chief, Sir James.

"The left wing contains the same number, commanded by the brave Allan Hamilton; and the whole is closed by six hundred, led by the brother of Sir Alexander, James M'Gregor: in all, my liege, three thousand two hundred men."

"And for what come they thus formidably?" demanded the king.

"To defend their country, and, if need be, with their bodies to make a rampart round their sovereign, and perish to a man in his defence."

"You have spoken, then, with them?"

"Yes, my liege, and bring from their commanders this message—that they will encamp in the dell, four miles from the town, and wait your grace's orders."

"We will meet them there," replied the king; then, turning to Sir Alexander, he added—"Chief, this is a pleasurable surprise, or I would not forgive you the deception—for I think you knew it."

"I did, my gracious lord. For this purpose only my friends hastened from the court; but even Randolph was ignorant of their intention."

"Was the Lady Ambrosine acquainted with it?" said the king.

"She was, my liege; and, lest the busy rumour of her husband's collecting men should reach your ear through the medium of slanderous enemies, she remained at Stirling with her children, a voluntary hostage for his honour."

"A noble lady!" said the king; she realises what we read of Roman women. Haste ye to her dwelling, and entreat her to accompany us to meet the chief."

The veteran accepted the commission, and the court broke up. Among the courtiers attached to the Lord of Roskelyn, there were not wanting

some who endeavoured to dissuade the king from meeting the party of Monteith and his friends; but he was deaf to their remonstrances, and a gallant cavalcade assembled and proceeded to the dell.

The tops of the houses of Stirling were covered, and the road lined with spectators. A guard rode first to clear the way; after which followed music; then the officers of state; and then the sovereign; on his right hand the Lady Ambrosine, on his left Phillippa; next followed Sir Alexander M'Gregor, Randolph, and Ronaldsa; then the sons of Monteith and the nobles of the kingdom, attended by a numerous and splendid retinue.

It may be conjectured the Lord of Roskelyn was not among the number. With his countess he had retired to the house of the dowager, where curiosity was sufficiently active to make him privately view the cavalcade.

The sight had different effects on the party. The warm and innocent heart of Matilda alone openly revealed its sentiments.

"Oh, what noble, gallant men!" exclaimed she. "What beautiful women! See how the king smiles upon them; no wonder—were I in his place, I would bestow my hand and heart as willingly on that young maid as—"

"I bestow that blow on thee," interrupted the Lady Roskelyn. "A curse on the whole party! Forward minx as thou art, repeat my words, lest I curse thee."

"Nay, patience, Ellen," said the Lord of Roskelyn. "You forget yourself. Matilda knows them not; and curses befit not such youthful lips."

"Curse on them twofold!" repeated she, madly; "and a treble curse on the day which I became a Roskelyn!"

"Lady Roskelyn," said the dowager, haughtily, "these fancies become not a wife who respects her husband's honour. My son was the man of your choice."

"Your son was the man of my choice; your eldest son, lady—can you deny that?"

The dowager's spirit was as vindictive as that of the Lady Roskelyn, though she held it in more command; and, stung with the freedom of her daughter-in-law's speech, she replied—"Such humours are not befitting the world's eye; they are marks of a husband's pusillanimity. In such case, confinement, a zealous confessor, strict diet, and constant penance, would do well to bring the mind to a proper state."

"Ha! ha! ha! when devils preach, let puny sinners laugh. Ha! ha! ha! do you talk of a husband's pusillanimity? You, who have broken through every duty, do you talk of confinement, zealous confessors, and a strict diet? Of constant penances you are indeed a judge; for I am well convinced you have endured them for many years, and will to your last hour."

"Dearest mother," said Matilda, "let me attend you to your apartment. I will soothe you to sleep with my harp."

"Sooner shalt thou soothe the turbulence of the sea. Away, base girl! thou hast not yet cursed my enemies."

"I pray you, Ellen, give way," said Roskelyn; "Matilda advises well; let me lead you forth."

Lady Roskelyn flew from him with mingled anger and disdain, while

the dowager regarded both with contempt, and said—"When husbands condescend too much, they give their wives a power that renders them ridiculous. Could I have expected to see my son thus treated by the daughter of Sir David Stuart, I would have avoided the connection as I would the pestilence."

"I conjure you, mother, cease. My wife is not well; and you but increase her agitation, and will disorder yourself."

"If her head should ache, we will bind it," said Lady Roskelyn, "with a curious handkerchief I have in my possession, black and scarlet, wrought in the corner with the device of Monteith, and the initials M. M., formerly in the possession of a midwife who attended the wife of M'Crae."

This blow on the dowager was unexpected; though so many years back she well recollected the handkerchief that had been lost; and she had hoped, after so long an interval, it was totally unknown.

"When you condescend to speak intelligibly," replied the dowager, "I will commune with you; until then, it is useless. For you, Roskelyn, when you have taught your wife the duty due to you, and the respect necessary to me, I shall be ready to receive you."

With these words she quitted the apartment, leaving Matilda in tears, the Lord Roskelyn in silent consternation, and his countess too much involved in her own vexation to give heed to either.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE king and his party advanced within a mile of the dell, when they saw a company of five horsemen approaching, and whom they soon recognised for Monteith, Ross, De Beurg, Hamilton, and M'Gregor, entirely unattended.

Reaching the king's company, they saluted the sovereign, who, checking his horse, said—"You are right welcome; but why meet me here? we meant to join you at your camp."

"My liege," replied Monteith, "we learned with pride and satisfaction your grace's intentions; but suspecting that some of our enemies might endeavour to empoison your ear with doubts of our loyalty, we resolved thus to come forth, and, if any suspicion rested on your mind, to put ourselves alone into your power."

"Monteith," replied the king, "your deeds, and those of your friends, give the lie to your enemies' words. I will judge for myself, and venture to predict I shall never repent the step I have taken on your account."

Monteith and his friends bowed, and, at his request, led the way to the camp, where they were received with repeated exclamations.

"Long live James the Second! Perish the enemies of the King of Scotland! Led on by our valiant commanders, we will conquer or die!"

The king walked through the whole camp and expressed his thanks to all, desiring that whatever might be wanting in clothes, weapons, or accoutrements, might be supplied from the public stores.

After remaining some time with the party, the king and his cavalcade returned to Stirling, Monteith attending him, leaving the command for a few hours with his companions.

On their return, they again passed the dwelling of the dowager, and again distracted the mind of the countess, who remained at the window.

No word, however, escaped her till the whole party had passed, when, starting from her seat, she said—"My lord, I will away for Roskelyn to-night; Matilda shall accompany me. For you, at your own time you will follow."

Roskelyn, though displeased, gave way; yet, needing the courage to contend with so vindictive a spirit, he simply acquiesced, and bade her use her pleasure.

Informed of the arrangement, the anger of the dowager appeared to change its object. She reproached her son for his want of spirit, and vowed an implacable enmity to the countess; finally quitting him, bade him, with passion, take the consequence.

Roskelyn, goaded by two such furies, would almost have given his life to be clear of both; but, yielding to the power of his wife, he prepared to accompany her.

The dowager left alone, her proud and active spirit endured a severe conflict. The mention of the handkerchief, lost so many years before at the house of M'Crae, drove her almost to madness, as it convinced her she was in the power of her daughter-in-law; not that she feared any disclosure on her part, as it must tend to lessen her own consequence, but that it subjected her to insult and scorn, which she could not brook. The weakness of her son, in yielding blind obedience to his wife, next wrought upon her fancy; and, though his conduct was not more so than that of his father had been in regard to herself, she saw it through a different medium, and considered it as pusillanimous and despicable. Matilda alone interested her; for, though their characters were as opposite as the eagle and the dove, yet the gentleness of the one had insensibly stifled the violence of the other, and entirely gained her affection. Removing her, therefore, was another insult beyond forgiveness; yet, to counterbalance this affection in the dowager's estimation, she was only a girl, and her name would be lost in marriage; consequently the property she had been years accumulating (for the late Earl of Roskelyn had left great sums in her own power) would only contribute to enrich some other family.

To contrast the family of Roskelyn, that of Monteith rose in her memory. Self-ennobled and brave, the chief was universally regarded as a man superior to his fellows, the idolizing husband of a wife beyond comparison good and fair—neither by word nor action lessening the consequence of each other.

Randolph came next, with James and St Clair. The first had begun the career of glory, and promised to yield to none; James, young as he was, already looked the chief, and was said to burn with impatience to emulate his father and brother: while the young St Clair, inferior to neither in future promise, appeared only to need years to equal his elders.

The beauty of Phillippa, which was a universal theme, was not without a place in her remembrance, as she conjectured that, added to the consequence of her father, it must match her into one of the first families in the kingdom. But even that was a secondary consideration; and Phillippa and Matilda fell into the shade before the superior claims of the three boys, who might transmit her boasted name and rank to posterity.

Agitated with these reflections, she at length retired to rest. Her rest was broken and unrefreshing. M'Crae and his wife first mingled with her dreams; but waking, and striving to overcome the impression, she

again composed herself to sleep. The second was more fearful. Death, as represented by painters and poets—a form of uncovered bones, with eyeless skull, and holding in his hand a scythe—appeared to advance towards her couch, but was restrained by her husband, who cried with a mournful voice to the spectre—"*Yet, yet a little time, I conjure thee;*" while her brother, the late chief of Monteith, on the other hand, said, audibly—"*Woman, awake, prepare—*"

Her fears rendered the sentence unfinished. She awoke trembling in every limb, the cold dews of perspiration standing in drops on her brow. "Gracious Virgin! how terrible!" said she; and, throwing herself from her bed, she gazed round the apartment, for the moment expecting to see her dream realised. The horrors were, however, confined to her own bosom; and calling to her waiting-woman, who slept in the next chamber, she resolved to retire no more that night.

The rising of the sun tended in some measure to calm the dowager's spirits; and her family remarked no change from her usual conduct. The dream was, however, impressed upon her memory too deeply to be forgotten.

CHAPTER XL.

The party of Monteith, recruited by a few days' rest, it was resolved they should march forward to the English borders. A select council sat daily; and Monteith and his friends, as they were known, became more estimable to their sovereign.

One evening previous to their departure, the king being in his closet, with only the chancellor, a woman of noble port, but whose face was concealed by the mourning weeds she wore, craved admittance to his presence. The king ordered her to be brought in, when he requested her to inform him of the business which had induced her to break in on his privacy.

"My liege," replied she, "I have a story of sin and shame to relate, which might make any woman pause, and which nothing but the pangs of conscience could force me to reveal."

"Lady," replied the king, "your voice is familiar to my ear; would it be too much to ask to see your face?"

"My lord, I came prepared. A few words to your highness, and I have done with it for ever; behold then the Dowager of Roskelyn," said she, throwing back the covering from her face; "she comes to reveal the shame which forty-five years she hath striven to conceal. My liege, spare me particulars; but I blush to confess that St Clair Monteith is my son, my eldest born, by the Lord of Roskelyn. In an hour of weakness, I yielded before marriage, and with cruelty denied my child to conceal my disgrace; even to my lord I never retracted the falsehood I at first told him, that the unhappy boy died at its birth, lest his parental feelings should cause him to acknowledge him to the world, and thus avow my want of chastity. To my second son, now called Lord Roskelyn, I have been more explicit, though never entirely so; and we both, by our conduct, appeared to know a secret which we dreaded to disclose to each other."

"Of this tale, lady, I have heard," answered the king; "but without this declaration of your own, should have felt compunction to bring the subject forward to the world. I, therefore, rejoice to find you inclined to do justice and make restitution."

"My lord, restitution is impossible; I have been the bane of my son's life, and never more dare I meet his eyes." I first deprived him of his birthright; next of the woman on whom he had fixed his affection; but there his good spirit predominated; for I bereft him of a fiend, and he found an angel. Next by the persecutions he endured · in the heat of youth he forgot himself in the presence of your father, and incurred banishment, involving his friends in the same disgrace, from which the conduct of his son hath alone rescued him. Can such deeds, my lord, be forgiven? If they can, 'tis not by mortal, but by heavenly spirits."

"Monteith is noble, lady; and noble minds bear not enmity with true repentance."

"Oh my liege, you know not half. Insulted, deprived of what his uncle Monteith left him, his property plundered, his person seized by a false pretence whilst sailing among the islands, and detained a considerable time a prisoner at the castle of the Countess of Roskelyn. But Heaven prevented the stroke that must have plunged us for ever past hope. His life was spared; and I see him surrounded by children at once beautiful and brave, while my second son hath only a daughter, whose name will be lost in marriage."

The king, though young, readily surmised the pride of family, as well as repentance, to have no small share in the countess's avowal. "Lady," said he, "depend, justice shall be done. Monteith departs with his friends and his men to-morrow; at Edinburgh he proposes to rest a few days; and there, if you please, we will confer further on this business. I answer for his respect to you, and pray your presence. Some means may be used to render all easy; the lady Matilda, for example, wedded to my friend Randolph; what think you of that? though cousins, the consent of the church might be obtained."

"I think of it, my liege, as a proposal from heaven; and could it be brought to a happy issue, should regard you as the blessed agent."

"I will use my endeavour. Retire, lady, and compose your spirits; 'tis never too late to act well. Three days hence, fail not to meet us at Edinburgh."

"Blessings and peace rest on your highness! I obey." So saying, she left the king's presence.

The king made no mention to Monteith, or to any one, of what had passed; but arriving at the city, resolved to discuss the business without loss of time.

On the second evening after his arrival at the city, the Lord and Lady Roskelyn, the Lady Matilda, the Dowager, Monteith, Ambrosine, Randolph, and Phillippa, received a summons to attend the sovereign without failure in the evening. Those orders were unknown to the separate families, and the purport unsuspected by all but the dowager.

All attended but the Lady Roskelyn, the conflict of whose mind had brought on a fever; and nothing but the king's especial command could have obliged the dutiful Matilda to leave her. Monteith and his family first arrived, and found the king and the chancellor, with three of the first law lords; but for the moment, they entered into no explanation.

Next came the dowager, in the mourning weeds she had assumed, and which caused great surprise to the family of St Clair. They remarked that the king received her with distinguished kindness, and were not without fear that her arts were again to be employed to their annoyance.

Last came the Lord of Roskelyn and his daughter. The first started on seeing the party, but, collecting his spirits, he advanced and apologised for the countess, by pleading her illness.

A silence unpleasant to all, succeeded, and which was first broken by the king. "My noble friends," said he, "I have a business to discuss this night, which needs no hearers but those immediately concerned, and the opinions of a few men most conversant in the laws of the country. My respect for the house of Roskelyn is great, and my obligations to Monteith and his son Randolph are also great. If possible, I will hold the scale impartially between ye. The Dowager of Roskelyn here, impelled by age and repentance, wishes, ere she dies, to do an act of justice; and, for that purpose comes forward to declare the truth, that St Clair, commonly called Monteith, is her eldest-born son by the late Earl of Roskelyn, but, from motives of shame, his birth was concealed from the world. A mother's oath is strong; and, if I mistake not, there be other, though weaker, testimonies of this truth, as I have heretofore heard. Speak, Roskelyn, and deny or confirm my words."

"Your words are most true, my liege. St Clair is my eldest son."

Lord Roskelyn appeared struck beyond the power of speech; but Monteith advancing said—"My gracious lord, I grieve that you have been troubled with a business which I never more can engage in. For myself and children, I for ever disclaim all right to the estate and name of Roskelyn, and will by law sign an irrevocable deed to that purpose. The Lord of Roskelyn may yet have a son, and whom I shall glory to acknowledge.".

"Never, never," exclaimed Roskelyn, sinking on his knee. "Generous St Clair, I dare not say brother, your conduct overpowers me; take, take your right; henceforward all I ask is obscurity."

Monteith raised him to his embrace—"Brother," repeated he, "let all the past be forgotten."

The dowager, oppressed with the scene, almost to fainting, said, with a faltering voice—"St Clair, my son, let me not die without your forgiveness!"

Monteith turned towards her—"Lady," replied he, "I rejoice to say I have a mother."

"Truly did the king say thou wert noble," answered she. "In this the first embrace and blessing I give thee, what a weight of sin appears lifted from my soul! Bring me thy wife, thy children; Oh, how I have longed to claim kindred with them!"

The Lady Ambrosine bent her knee, as did Randolph, James and Phillipps. The dowager then embraced all with transport. St Clair," said she, "here, in the king's presence, I claim a promise,—though you reject for yourself the name and lands of Roskelyn, yet, should my son John die without male issue, that you will suffer them to be received and held by the lawful heir; for, so well have I seen in Randolph the duty of your children, that never, I judge, without your consent will they accept it."

"I repeat," replied St Clair, "that for myself and children, I disclaim it for ever; but more of this hereafter; the time presses, and family concerns become secondary to the public welfare."

"On the return from the campaign," said the king, "all may be rendered easy. For example, a union of the families would, I think, be most desirable. What say you, Lord Roskelyn, and you, my brave friend?"

"I will be guided by your highness," answered Lord Roskelyn.

"My liege," said Monteith, "in the idleness of peace it will be soon enough to talk of these matters. Put not love into my boys' heads, I pray you; it will drive out valour."

"We will defer it, then," returned the king, smiling. "Come, lady Roskelyn, resume your wonted spirits; all, I am convinced, will go to your wishes. There is no shame in having given birth to a brave man."

"Your grace's notice honours me," answered she. "This duty done, I have no further business with the world, and will away to a convent."

"Not so, dear mother," replied Ambrosine, taking her hand; "you owe us a long debt of love, and we owe you a long debt of duty and affection. Accompany us to Monteith. In playing the hostess, I shall be beguiled of half my sorrow, and the cares of my children shall divert yours."

"Ambrosine," replied the dowager, "may I say daughter? receive my thanks; but your kindness stings me to the heart; is it possible you can forget——"

"I forget everything but the present happiness," interrupted she, "and which will be incomplete if you refuse my request. Monteith will join in the entreaty; and if he fails, I will claim the interest of our kind sovereign himself."

"You have it, sweet lady," replied the king; "your eyes and words bear a power not to be resisted; and the dowager must perforce comply."

"I pray ye, good mother," said Monteith, "become acquainted with my family; I will wager my life that on my return, I will find you satisfied with them."

"I doubt it not; but their kindness will but add fresh pangs to my heart. I will, however, go, if you indeed wish it."

"I do, from my soul," replied he, respectfully raising her hand to his lips; "Ambrosine possesses a witching power, and will beguile unpleasant remembrances; for at Barra, after her arrival, the days passed with me as swiftly as hours, and the years as days."

"In truth," said the king, "you will make us young men mad to be wedded, if, after so long a union the fascination still remains."

"May your grace be as happy as myself in a wife!" replied Monteith —"But come," added he, to the Lord of Roskelyn, "my brother here looks sad, and there is no occasion for grief."

"Sweet maid," said Ambrosine, advancing with Phillippa to the Lady Matilda, "my daughter and you must be acquainted. Will you not acknowledge your new relations?"

Matilda though pale and agitated on account of her father, pressed Ambrosine's hand to her lips. "Lady," said she, "if I may, I will love you dearly; my heart bounded when I saw you first, though our relationship was then unknown to me."

Phillippa, with affection, saluted her cousin; and an entire reconciliation effected, the king arose, saying, "By my life, would men act uprightly, the law would be the poorest of all professions; for see, we have concluded a business that might have employed all the lawyers in Scotland, until it had transposed the property of both parties into their own pockets;" and all then taking leave of him retired to their respective habitations.

CHAPTER XLI.

MONTEITH, on his return home with his family, found his friends assembled. They were greatly astonished at the recital of what had passed, and expressed their entire approbation of the conduct of the chief. Randolph being engaged with Ronaldsa in professional duties, and the other young people with their mother, they entered fully into the future arrangements respecting that youth. "This campaign over," said Monteith, "in which I trust he will distinguish himself, he shall be truly informed of his birth. As my son I shall ever regard him, and rejoice that, by the reconciliation of to-night, his future duty will not keep us strangers, unless, indeed, his father should be so exasperated at the trick played him as to break our new-made friendship."

"Of that," replied De Bourg, "there is little danger. His own interest, and the satisfaction of being father to so noble a youth, will obliterate all other considerations."

"With his father I think they will; but for his mother, I know not."

"Why, in faith," said Ross, "in her case I can form no judgment. His visit to her castle, and his liberation of you, are awkward circumstances to overcome; for she may suppose him better informed than he really is."

"At all events," observed Hamilton, "Randolph hath seen her real disposition, and will be guarded against her arts."

"He will," answered M'Gregor; "but now to another subject. De Bourg and I this day, for want of other employment, rode to Inveresk, and, with the curiosity of old women, inquired into the story told us by Donald M'Kenzie."

"And returned with old women's payment," said Monteith: "your labour for your pains."

"Not so," replied he. "Strange as it may appear, the prediction is inserted in the church book the year before our banishment to Barra, and the names of the men who witnessed it signed thereto. The old friar who inserted it hath been dead twelve years: and, on further inquiry, the seer of Roskelyn Glen, we learned, had been deceased near twenty. For further satisfaction, I copied the words from the book."

Monteith read and returned the writing. "If we believe in dreams," said he, "this augurs well. For my part, I trust only to a good cause, a strong arm, and a sharp sword."

"You now," said M'Gregor, "begin to find the advantage of having had Randolph in your possession. Could the dowager have conceived there was an heir to Roskelyn alive, she had never made this avowal."

"I should suppose not," replied he; "but let us be satisfied that she hath at length done justice, without examining the matter too closely. Now to business. Are ye all prepared to depart?"

All replied in the affirmative; and they were soon after joined by Ambrosine, who, in spite of her outward calmness, felt some severe internal pangs at the approaching separation.

Meanwhile Roskelyn, with a still agitated mind, took the way to his castle. Though his wife by her violence, he had no doubt, had forced the dowager to this discovery, yet he was convinced her rage would be beyond all bounds; and, accustomed to yield to the storm, he already trembled at its approach, while Matilda rode by his side in silence, and was not divested of the same fears.

On reaching the castle, they were informed that the countess requested their presence. Curious to learn the purport of the extraordinary summons which they had received, she had risen, and, though confined to her chamber, waited their return with impatience. Concealment was impossible; and though, in fact, Roskelyn was less guilty than either his wife or mother, he felt as though himself was the greatest culprit.

The tale revealed, though in the most gentle terms, had all the effect he expected. Malice and despair sat on the brow of the countess, while she gnashed her teeth with anguish, and, with impotent rage, tore her hair. To this paroxysm succeeded a torrent of words, levelled at once at her lord and his mother. "The chaste matron," said she, "the daughter and the sister of the chiefs of the house of Monteith, hath then avowed her infamy!—she who could forget every feeling of a mother—she who assisted, by base arts, to entrap me into a marriage with her youngest son, while the eldest sued at my feet! Fool, fool that I was, the deserved requital has fallen upon me!"

"Dear mother," said Matilda, "do not agitate yourself thus. Neither your fortune nor your name will suffer by this discovery. My uncle hath disclaimed both."

"Thy uncle! Say that word again, and I strike thee at my feet! Come, girl, be dutiful, and curse them. Thou evadedst it at Stirling."

"Indeed I cannot. You terrify me to death."

Lady Roskelyn raised her hand to strike, when her lord put his daughter aside. "Retire, Matilda," said he, "this is no scene for you."

"She shall not go," screamed the countess. "At her peril let her stir."

As she spoke, she endeavoured to pass her lord; but restraining her, he said—"Ellen, I am master here. Go, Matilda, and return not till I call you."

Matilda obeyed, and the Lady Roskelyn, astonished, replied—"Thou master here! thou, John of Roskelyn! thou, poor dependent on thy brother's bounty! Didst thou possess the spirit of a man, thou wouldst have dashed the insolent offer back in his throat; but thou fearest him."

"Not half so much as I fear thee, vindictive woman. Thy tyrant reign is past. I throw thy slavery off for ever. Command is mine—thy part obedience."

"Obedience to thee!—never! Go thou, ere thou talkest of command, and take lessons of the brave, the unparalleled Monteith; and when thou resemblest him, thou shalt meet obedience."

"Thou counsellest well: I mean it. And in return, do thou observe the gentle, unassuming Ambrosine. Copy her closely. See her smiles on her husband, the affection with which she looks on her children. Imitate those, I say, Ellen, and thou shalt deserve a tenderness hitherto misplaced."

In all the discourse that had passed, no word appeared to wound so deeply as the allusion to Ambrosine. Passion rendered her speechless. Her face suddenly became black, her eyes projected, and the blood issued in a torrent from her mouth.

Alarmed, the Lord Roskelyn called assistance and retired, unable to bear so dreadful a spectacle, for it was plain her violence had broken a blood-vessel. His mind wounded by the scene he had undergone before the king, he was not in his usual frame of temper to bear her upbraidings; but he exerted himself too late, for custom and indulgence had nurtured her vices till they were incorrigible.

That she had never loved him, was too plain to be overlooked even by himself; but the reflection had been mitigated until the last two disputes, by the supposition that she had entertained no other partiality. Much less did he suspect for St Clair, of whom she had ever spoken with rancour and vehemence. Her conduct, too, contrasted with that of the wife of Monteith, also conspired to make him feel her tyranny.

Though moved by her situation, he kept from her chamber, but he made perpetual enquiries respecting her health; and on the ensuing morning, hearing she was better, ordered Matilda to attend him in the hall. "My child," said he, "for a while I leave Roskelyn. Every active man in the kingdom must wish to do his part to expel the common enemy; and it becomes me not to be exempt from my share of the danger. I mean to collect my vassals, and away to the borders. In the meantime, bestow every care and attention on your mother; but if she forgets herself as heretofore, I charge you to hasten to the dowager, let her be where she will. I have this night written to her for that purpose."

Matilda sunk at her father's feet. "O my lord, I conjure you," cried she, "rush not into those horrid encounters, if there be no stronger tie, for the sake of your child. My mother will be sorry for her violence, now the paroxysm is past. I pray ye go to her."

"No, Matilda; my presence would rather retard than forward her recovery. Monteith leaves all in the common cause. I have no tie but thee; and should I fall, this night I have, by a testament, secured thy fortune. The man who could refuse the just claim he hath on the domain of Roskelyn is truly noble, Matilda. All prejudice sinks before such conduct. He is thy guardian; or, if he falls, his wife. Thy welfare is now my only care."

Matilda again attempted to persuade her father to see the countess, but in vain; and, dismissing her to her chamber, he arranged all for the interval of his absence, and, three days after, left Roskelyn with two hundred men, to join the party which had preceded him.

At the appointed day Monteith and his friends left the city, and travelled towards the borders. Previous to their departure, the chief, with Randolph and James, went to bid the dowager farewell—a token of duty she was far from expecting, and which gave her great satisfaction. She promised to pass the interval of their absence at the castle of Monteith, and with tears and blessings bade him and her grandson farewell.

At the separation, Ambrosine, as usual, betrayed no sign of discomposure. She pressed her husband, Randolph, and James alternately in her arms. "Heaven guard and speed you!" said Ambrosine. "A short time, I trust, and we shall meet in peace and happiness."

Having previously taken leave of the king, she departed the same day

that her husband left the city, for the castle of Monteith, with Phillippa and St Clair. She found Jean and her mother already arrived; and, appropriating an apartment for the elder, entertained Jean among her own waiting-women. The story of the handkerchief she treated lightly, telling both mother and daughter that the child had since been acknowledged, and all mystery long ceased respecting him.

Some days after, the dowager, according to her promise, arrived; and though at first the remembrance of her former conduct oppressed her, yet the care and attention of Ambrosine lessened it daily; and, treated with a respect she had never been accustomed to from the Lady Roskelyn, she felt increased satisfaction at the recital she had made. Phillippa soon bore an equal share with Matilda in her affection; and for her brother, considering him as the youngest of *three* sons, she declared she took his fortune upon herself, and would pay to the young St Clair, as far as in her power, the debt she owed his father.

Among those that rejoiced at the change that had taken place, none felt greater satisfaction than father Thomas. He not only congratulated the parties at the castle, but for several days, with his brethren, held solemn thanksgivings in the chapel.

The Countess of Roskelyn, though unable to leave her chamber, was somewhat recovered. The intelligence of her husband joining the army filled her with astonishment, as did also his quitting the castle without bidding her farewell. She plainly saw that her passion had carried her too far, but, depending on his former weakness, had no doubt of subduing his anger on his return. She also heard, with an acrimony that had nearly renewed her disorder, that the dowager was at Monteith; and, sinking from the frenzy of passion into that malignant state of envy which preys upon the heart, she shunned all company. even that of her daughter; and, yielding to the envenomed canker that consumed her vitals, her body became thin and bent, her skin yellow and shrivelled, and her fine eyes sunken. The change in her person did not escape herself. It added to her other torments, and daily increased the evil that she wished to surmount.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE party of Monteith and his friends had reached the shire of Dumfries, when they were joined by the Lord Roskelyn, who asked to be admitted of their party with a frankness that gained him a ready welcome; after which they proceeded to join the main army, commanded by George Douglas, Earl of Ormond, and Wallace of Craigie. The English in the meantime had crossed the Solway Frith, and ravaged that part of the country, but, hearing of the approach of the Scottish army, called in their marauding parties, and fixed their camp on the banks of the river Sark. Their advanced guard was commanded by Magnus, an experienced warrior, who had been trained to arms in the French wars, and who, from the colour and bushiness of his beard, was called in derision by the Scots—Magnus with the red mane! The centre of the English army was commanded by the Earl of Northumberland, and the rear by Sir John Pennington.

The Scots were likewise in three divisions. The right wing was com-

manded by Wallace, the centre by the Earl of Ormond, and the left wing by the Lords Maxwell and Johnstone.

The party of Monteith and his friends were also separated; that of the chief, with Randolph, James, and Roskelyn, with their men, into the right wing; those of Ross and M'Gregor into the centre; and those of Hamilton, with De Bourg and Ronaldsa, into the left division.

A decisive battle was resolved on by both parties, and all was prepared on each side. The Earl of Ormond harangued the troops, and fired them with resentment against the English, whom he accused of treachery and want of faith, in constantly breaking the truce made with the Scots.

Previous to the encounter, Monteith gave some general directions to Randolph and James, to the former of whom he entrusted the command of a hundred of his picked men;—"Randolph, my brave lad," said he, embracing him, "my heart whispers me that thou wilt this day distinguish thyself in a manner I shall exult to see; but remember, prudence is as necessary to a soldier as valour. In the battle, think not of me; for, though disuse may have rusted my arms, the fervour of former years shall this day wipe off the spots. The only one I fear for is the Lord of Roskelyn. He is not used to these contests. The late vexation he hath endured may make him regardless of life. Should it so happen that you be near him, disregard him not." James, in this his first onset, he ordered to keep near himself.

The signal for battle given, the right wing, commanded by Wallace, rushed forward upon the enemy, but were received with so dreadful a discharge from the English archers, that their impetuosity must have been checked, had not their leader called upon them to trust to their swords and spears, and follow him. Monteith and his comrades seconded his example. "Come on, my brave friends!" exclaimed he to his men. "These English fight well at a distance; we will try their mettle nearer."

So saying, the whole party rushed upon the advanced guard commanded by Magnus; and a most fearful slaughter ensued on both sides, as each fought with the greatest animosity. Wallace performed prodigies of valour; nor was Monteith inferior to him in skill or courage. They spread desolation around, and were foremost in the road to death. In the confusion, the Lord of Roskelyn was wounded, beaten down, and had been slain but for Monteith, who, seeing his danger, rushed forward, and, with his broadsword, struck off the arm raised against him; then, giving him in charge to a party of his men, he cried hastily—"Bear off the Lord of Roskelyn to the camp; he is wounded, but I hope not to death."

Again Monteith entered into the thickest of the fight. Passing Randolph, he observed his quick eye singling out the boldest victims, and eager in the pursuit of glory. In the heat of the fight he encountered Magnus. Wedged on either side with their several parties, neither gave place. Magnus raised his sword, which fell on the shield of Randolph with a clattering sound; at the same time saying—"Give way, boy; cross not the path of men, or thus I annihilate thee."

Monteith saw, and, perhaps for the first time, trembled at danger. He spurred forward to assist his adopted son, but ere he could reach him, the combat had attained its height. Fearful of lessening the glory of Randolph, he gazed without interference. The blows of Magnus were

heavy; but, undaunted, the youth redoubled his activity; and each darting forward at once with their spears, the horses of both were slain, and their weapons broken.

"Oh that the battle hung on his onset!" cried Magnus. "'Tis a brave boy, and I could grieve to slay him. Give way, noble lad! Thou shalt obtain honourable terms."

Magnus, as he spoke, bent forward, as, for a moment, did Randolph, to recover breath; but the next, attacking him with his sword, he replied—

"I mean it, valiant Magnus. Come on: thou or I must yield! Either thou shalt conquer the boy, or the boy conquer the man."

The conflict on foot was terrible. Every blow appeared the final stroke. The harness which defended the right arm of Randolph was broken, as was that of Magnus in various places. In vain the veteran strove, by a well-aimed blow, to end the conflict. Randolph at length, by a decisive stroke, laid his experienced enemy at his feet.

The cries of both parties rent the air; that of Magnus with despair, that of the Scots with triumph. The youth Randolph was naked to the shoulder, and the mark which nature gave was mistaken for blood.

"Ruin! ruin!" cried the followers of the English leader. "Our commander is fallen. Hope is lost! Away!"

The Scots, elated by the fall of so formidable an opponent, exclaimed—"Victory! victory! The red mane is fallen! the bloody arm triumphs! and Scotland shall be free from the tyrant yoke of England!"

"Bear your leader from the field," cried Randolph: accursed be he who makes so noble a warrior prisoner. Bear him away, I say. Nay, gently; did I love my country less, I could weep at this victory."

Twisting his plaid around his arm, Randolph again rushed into the battle, which had now become universal, and, for a time, was obstinately contested on both sides, but finally ended in the defeat of the English, who fled towards the Solway, where, the river being swelled by the tide, numbers were drowned.

On the part of the Scots, the loss was six hundred; but no one of note fell, except the valiant Wallace, who died three months after of the wounds he had received in battle.

The conflict over, mutual congratulations took place; but none shared a greater degree of glory than Monteith and his friends, several of whom were wounded, but slightly; and, a time given for repose, they resolved to leave the borders, where all was quiet, and had every appearance of remaining so.

The conquest of Magnus, who died as his men were removing him from the field, had given a glory to Randolph, which enrolled his name amongst those of the most distinguished warriors.

The Lord of Roskelyn's wound was severe, and it was nearly a month before he could be removed; during which interval Monteith, with an affection that covered his brother with shame, declined returning to the city. His comrades also remained with him, for, in a private conference, they had agreed that, should the Lord of Roskelyn's wound take an unfavourable turn, he should not die without the satisfaction of knowing and acknowledging his son—an information they otherwise meant to delay till the family was more fully assembled. To their wishes, at the end of three weeks he was convalescent, and they prepared to depart; but, on

the evening before, finding himself alone with St Clair, he thus addressed him:—

"It is with confusion and shame I receive your attentions. One only step can reconcile me to myself: let me restore your domains, and take a younger brother's portion."

"Roskelyn," answered Monteith, "we have both room for forgiveness. If hereafter I should need yours, do not withhold it."

"By my soul I will not; but you never injured me."

"You speak beyond your knowledge; the conduct of my family might have provoked retaliation from a milder spirit than mine."

"In truth, it might," replied Roskelyn warmly; "and my wife, I am now well assured, loved you. Your long residence in her castle hath often staggered me. But if this my suspicion be true, it is a triumph unbecoming Monteith; and though I am sunk, yet you must hereafter answer it."

"Roskelyn," returned Monteith, calmly, "I will answer it now. As to my confinement in the Castle of the Valley, it is the only act I cannot sincerely forgive; for the uncertainty of my fate had nearly plunged my wife in the grave, in which case thy family and mine had been foes for ever. During my absence, she, my children, and friends, employed all my thoughts; and, had the charms of all women been united in thy wife, they would have made no impression on my heart. I plainly tell thee, I saw her with hatred and abhorrence; and, if thou doubtest my honour, will confirm my words by the most sacred oath thou canst require."

"Enough," replied Roskelyn; "forgive me. The action was indeed unpardonable, and, as she related it, her motives to me were ambiguous. However, I thank Heaven thou escapedst safe from harm; and, if it will not give thee too much vexation, oblige me with thy account of the transaction."

Monteith complied; carefully avoiding, however, all that might awaken the jealousy of Roskelyn.

Roskelyn heard him with astonishment. He had no idea of the plan having been so deeply laid, and protested ignorance of the whole till after Monteith's escape. "I shudder to think," said he, "that murder might have terminated this business, but for that noble lad Randolph. Oh Monteith, Heaven to thee hath been peculiarly gracious. What is banishment with such a wife and children? Kings might look down from their thrones on thee with envy!"

"Thou sayest truly. And so sensible am I of my happiness that, even from the first hour I loved Ambrosine, never, even in fancy, have my thoughts strayed from her; and now, as when decked in all her virgin charms, is she, in my eyes, the fairest and best of women."

"Yet, in youth, St Clair," said Roskelyn, "thy heart was more susceptible. Thou lovedst Ellen; and for Randolph, by his age, he is not, I judge, the son of the heiress of Kintail."

"Pooh, man, thou art no confessor! yet I will thus far set thee right: I never truly loved till I knew Ambrosine; for Randolph, I swear to thee his birth is right lawful, and he shall be heir to my domains."

"And nobly will he transmit your name to posterity," answered Roskelyn. "The king's offer of uniting our families pleases me well. What say you to it?"

"We will unite them if affection and occasion suit; but of this here-

after. I would that thy wife would suffer the lady Matilda to be acquainted with Phillippa."

"She shall be so on our return," answered Roskelyn. I will no longer be the dastardly slave of that tyrannical woman's caprices."

At that moment some of the friends entering, the conversation became general; and the Lord Roskelyn, a few days after, being able to sit his horse, they retook their way to the capital.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE interval of Monteith's absence had at first passed heavily with his family; but the result of the battle of Sark dispersed their fears, and revived their hopes, as, by a messenger, he informed them that he should speedily return.

The bravery of Randolph was repeated to them by a hundred mouths, and highly applauded by all, so that the dowager felt daily gratification from the avowal she had made. A report that the troops were on their return to the city, where they were to be disbanded, had reached them, and caused the Lady Ambrosine to propose to the dowager a journey to Edinburgh, to meet and welcome their friends. This was agreed on, and all departed for that purpose.

Three days after their arrival, they received the gladsome tidings that the troops were only at the distance of a few miles, when the party resolved to meet them. The dowager and Ambrosine rode first, and after them Phillippa and St Clair, followed by the domestics: and, to their great satisfaction, they had not proceeded above four miles, when they discovered, from a height, the troops advancing in a hollow beneath.

The keen eye of Randolph first discovered the party, and, pointing it out to Monteith, "I would wager my life," said he, "that yonder is my beloved mother and sister."

Monteith acquiesced in Randolph's opinion, and, spurring their horses, they speedily reached them.

Both leaped from their horses, and Ambrosine, throwing herself from the saddle into her husband's arm, cried, "Welcome! welcome!" being all that joy had left her power to articulate.

Randolph instinctively flew to Phillippa, who clasped his neck breathless, and almost senseless with pleasure.

"My Ambrosine," exclaimed Monteith, "this is indeed a surprise; but thus you ever outstrip my wishes."

"Welcome! most welcome!" repeated she, grasping her husband's hand, and tears, in spite of her utmost efforts, flowing from her eyes. "May this be the last time we ever separate! But joy hath rendered us both ungrateful. See, the dowager hath honoured us so far as to accompany me in this meeting."

"Lady," said Monteith, turning to his mother, "this is a favour so unexpected, that you must pardon my unwilling neglect; for, in truth, I did not see you. Suffer me," said he, lifting her from her horse, "to thank you for a condescension that does me so much honour."

"St Clair," replied she, embracing him, "could more blessings be heaped upon thee, I would pray for them; but, my son, thy happiness I think as complete as possible for that of men. For me, too, the atten-

tions of thy wife and children appear to have renovated my youth, and led me into the true road to peace; for thy house is heaven, and thy wife the ministering spirit."

"Lady," replied St Clair, gaily, "did I not tell you it would be thus? The Circe hath laid her spells on you, and never will she unloose the charm she hath spread over your senses."

"I trust she will not," replied the dowager; "for 'tis the sweetest charm my heart ever felt."

"Heaven then continue it!" answered Monteith, joining the hands of his wife and the dowager. "We owe each other, good mother, a long debt of affection. May the lives of both be spared till it be paid!"

The dowager was moved even to tears. "My son," said she, "how have I abused you! An hundred years of kindness could not expiate my conduct."

"It is expiated, dear lady. Those who have always had a good mother cannot so truly appreciate as I do the value of that tender relative.—Nay, Phillippa, dost thou not welcome me?"

"A thousand thousand times welcome!" said Phillippa, repeatedly embracing her father.

The young St Clair then embraced his father, when they were joined by Roskelyn, James Monteith, and the rest of their friends. The dowager was at once astonished and delighted to see the friendship that reigned between her sons; and, after embracing Roskelyn, they remounted their horses and joined their troops, which had halted for a short refreshment.

The first rapture of meeting past, they rode through the ranks, when the vassals of Kintail, elated at the sight of their generous mistress, surrounded her, clapping their hands, and expressing their satisfaction by repeated acclamations and blessings. Waving her hand to procure silence, she at length succeeded, when she thus addressed them:—"My good friends, my heart is too full at the present moment to thank you as I ought, for the brave support you have afforded my beloved husband in the battle of Sark; but, believe me, I feel it with gratitude, and trust to repay the obligation. The justice of our noble sovereign hath revoked the sentence that confined us to Barra; and I hope we shall henceforth be better neighbours at the castle of Kintail, where we purpose to spend a part of our time, and where I shall not only be always glad to see my friends, but also to remove any pecuniary difficulty they may labour under, from sickness or other unavoidable distress. For such brave men as have fallen in this conflict, and which, I joy to hear, are few, their wives and children devolve to me, and to my utmost will I supply the loss they have sustained. As the troops will, I hear, be speedily disbanded, I conclude by wishing you all to hasten home; for I judge by myself how welcome the sight of husbands and sons must be after such an absence."

Acclamation and praises again rent the air. To Ambrosine they afforded no triumph; but the proud heart of the dowager exulted, as she passed through the ranks, to hear the encomiums passed on her as the parent of Monteith. "'Tis the Dowager of Roskelyn! our chief's mother!" said the men of Monteith. "In faith he inherits her lofty port; his eyes and brows, too, are the same. Happy lady! If you be a proud mother, who can wonder, when you have given to the world one of the noblest of men?"

The dowager, moved at once by the example of Ambrosine and by the words of the vassals, replied—"I thank ye all. The same as the heiress of Kintail hath promised to her vassals, accept from me. I owe that duty to my father's house, and to the affection I bear my son."

Again the plaudits echoed through the troops, which when somewhat subsided, St Clair, addressing his men, said—"My mother hath been beforehand with me in the duty I proposed to take on myself; but I rejoice at it, as I leave you in abler and better hands than mine—with one who will show you that she truly shares the blood of her noble father, and ever-honoured brother. I rejoice, also, as it leaves me more ample means to testify my gratitude to my long-tried and faithful associates, the brave islanders, to whom I owe obligations which never can be repaid, and which, when I forget, may Heaven forsake me!"

The islanders were not more backward in testifying their acknowledgments than their comrades had been; and the first effusion somewhat subsided, Roskelyn and the other chiefs followed the example set by the family of Monteith, promising friendship to their men, and provision to the wives and children of those who had fallen in battle.

The scene of exultation passed, they proceeded to the city, when the chiefs immediately waited on the king, who received them with the distinction their valour demanded.

The duty paid to the sovereign, the Lord Roskelyn took the way to his castle, where he was received with satisfaction by Matilda, who informed him of the decline that consumed her mother, and also that she refused all company, and even sometimes for days obstinately declined to see her.

The Lord of Roskelyn had not so far forgotten his affection to hear the account unmoved. He flew to his wife's apartment, but started on observing the change that so short a time had made in her person; and, testifying his sorrow at her situation, entreated that all past animosities might be forgotten.

"Aye, when I forget to live," replied she, "the family of Monteith have empoisoned the air I breathe, even buried in the solitude of my chamber, their accursed triumphs reach my ear. That bastard Randolph, too, is now the idol of the day. Oh, for one hour in which I might involve them all in dismay and ruin! gladly, joyfully, would I perish with them!"

The Lord Roskelyn was vexed to find that sickness had made no alteration in the bitter spirit of his wife, and soon left her.

On the ensuing day he took Matilda to Edinburgh, to pay her duty to her grandmother. She saw the tenderness of Ambrosine for her children without envy; but an involuntary tear flowed as she contrasted her conduct with that of her own mother.

"Sweet niece," said Ambrosine, embracing her, "your father is now indeed truly kind; this is a satisfaction the more welcome as it was unexpected."

Monteith next embraced her, and presented her to his sons and Phillippa, who all followed his example; and, after a stay of some time, they parted, mutually satisfied with each other.

Previous to their departure, Monteith, addressing Roskelyn and the dowager said—"We mean to depart hence in a few days: our mother hath already promised to accompany us home; and I must request that

you also, brother, favour us for a short time, as I have a conference to hold with you of the utmost importance to both, but most particularly to yourself. For the countess, her ill state of health deprives us of that hope; but you will double the obligation, if you bring the Lady Matilda with you."

Roskelyn, for himself, accepted the invitation; but on the part of Matilda, appeared irresolute.

"Surely she may attend me," replied the dowager, "if you be afraid to tell your wife she is at the castle of Monteith."

Roskelyn adopted the idea with a blush, and taking leave, left them.

"Now, in faith, mother," said Monteith, "you are too hard. Think you not my brother hath enough with that vindictive, turbulent woman, without reproach?"

"'Tis his own fault," replied she. "Had he at first exerted a proper spirit, she would never have been so complete a tyrant. She would never have dared to act thus with *you*."

"Thank Heaven I was spared the trial! for, by my life, I would sooner encounter a host of foes than combat her diabolical spirit. I never yet fled from an enemy; but, were she my opponent, I think I should leave her a clear field."

"You overrate your modesty," said De Bourg; "you would first have had a hard struggle for mastery."

"No, in truth; I should yield it up for a lost business, and seek in some other country that peace my own denied me."

"I am of my father's opinion," said Randolph; "I would fly such a woman as I would the pestilence."

"Pooh, ye are cowards!" replied De Bourg. "But what think ye of the Lady Matilda?"

"She inherits none of her mother's evil qualities," said the dowager, "and is so gentle that I must wonder her mother's humours have not proved fatal to her.—But what think you of her, Randolph?"

"I think her most amiable, lady, from what I can judge from so short an acquaintance; and, better known, might almost consider her a sister."

"Almost a sister! nothing more, Randolph?" repeated the dowager.

"Nothing more! nay, in truth, not so much; for I shall never love one so well as Phillippa."

The words of Randolph escaped before he was aware; and, suddenly checking himself, he remained silent.

"Yet, in all probability, you will sometime wed; in which case, your wife must not be secondary."

Randolph blushed deeply. "I spoke of sisters," said he. "In all probability I shall never marry; my mind must change greatly before that event happens."

"Never!" repeated Monteith, laughing. "I once formed such a resolution, but Ambrosine made me glad to retract it."

"And when I meet an Ambrosine, I shall be equally glad," answered Randolph, more gaily; "so I pray to remain single till that time."

The dowager was not quite satisfied with the reply; but her happiness was so much greater than she had for years experienced, that all trivial objects gave way to it.

The troops soon after being disbanded, the party left the city, and returned to the castle of Monteith.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Not long after their arrival, they were joined by Ross, M'Gregor, Hamilton, and Sir Alexander; De Bourg having accompanied them, and Ronaldsa remaining in the city on business connected with the departure of the disbanded forces.

It was resolved, on the arrival of Roskelyn, to bring forward the discovery so interesting to him and Randolph, and which, they surmised, might have different effects on the parties concerned. The point, however, above all others, was obtained, and which had never been expected—the public avowal of the legitimacy of Monteith; his liberation from banishment had also been effected by the same object, though by different means than were at first proposed. Of the future affection of Randolph, no one entertained the smallest distrust; his attachment to the whole of the family was truly filial; so that, the bar once removed, there could be no doubt that he would proclaim his affection for Phillippa.

Some days after their arrival at Monteith, the dowager, in a private conversation with her son and Ambrosine, informed them that it was her intention, as their eldest sons would be sufficiently provided for, to take on herself the establishment of the young St Clair, and, by an irrevocable deed, constitute him heir to the estates in her own power. The deed, she said, was already drawn, and ready for signature, and should be that day executed.

Monteith's honour was too great to suffer her to execute a deed which she might hereafter wish revoked—"Good mother," replied he, "though thoroughly sensible of your goodness, let me entreat you to delay it a few days; I have something to communicate on the arrival of my brother, that may make a change in your opinion."

"Not so," said she, "you have for yourself, and indeed for your children, disclaimed the domain of Roskelyn, but you have no power to bind them to forfeit their right; and, previous to my leaving the city, I do not hesitate to say, that I had an interview with the king and chancellor, both of whom have pledged me their words to see hereafter, should they outlive Roskelyn, your children reinstated in their rightful possessions, without which my soul will neither rest; nor ought you, from a false pride, in duty to prevent it."

"Agreed," replied he, "if Roskelyn dies without heirs. Should he have a son, remember, lady, the contract is void."

"You act wilfully, but I submit; for there is small probability of his having more children."

Monteith then again pressed her to delay executing the deed for a few days, to which she unwillingly consented.

At length a messenger arrived to inform them that the Lord of Roskelyn approached, when Monteith, with his sons and friends, went out to meet and bid him welcome. The union of the brothers caused universal joy; music sounded from every quarter: the priests with Father Thomas, supported by a junior brother, at their head, singing Te

Deum, met them at the end of the avenue, while the crowding vassals, with loud acclamations mingled in the concert.

At the portal they were received by the noble hostess, who bade him welcome with the true frankness of a sister.

"Brother" said she, "I but half rejoice to see you, for you bring not the lady Matilda with you."

"Sweet sister," said he, "let the omission bring no blame on me; her mother's commands and her own wishes detain her, and I combated them not."

"The countess is, I trust, in better health, then!" said Ambrosine, as Roskelyn led her to the hall.

"I can scarcely reply to that question," answered he—"her looks are ill, but she says her health is better; and, in reference to Matilda, she is entirely changed, for she scarcely suffers her from her sight."

"That is no wonder; she is formed to be her mother's pride and happiness."

"I thank you for her, lady; she is indeed mild and unassuming, and will hereafter, I trust, cultivate your favour."

"She hath it already; I only wish to be more acquainted." As they spoke, they entered the hall, where Roskelyn, having paid his duty to the dowager, was received warmly by the whole party.

Mutual congratulations over, a sumptuous repast was served, and the goblet went gaily round, till the vassals being withdrawn, Monteith filled a bumper to the health of the Lord of Roskelyn, and their new cemented friendship; at that same time vowing that it should never be broken by him.

Roskelyn drank the pledge, and a short pause ensued, when Monteith, addressing the dowager, said—"Pardon me, lady, for reverting to past times, but, remember you the seer Andrew?"

"I do," answered she; "even at this moment his prediction is in my thoughts. It is accomplished; music resounds through the halls of Monteith, and sworn foes drink from the same friendly bowl; yet I comprehend not what was meant by the red mane, who should bite the ground under the feet of a willing captive."

The name, given in derision by the soldiers to Magnus, struck as material on the mind of Randolph; but the allusion to him was dark, and the impression momentary.

"It may hereafter be explained, lady," answered Monteith to his mother. "There was also another prediction, some years after, inserted in the priest's books of Inveresk, by two vassals of my brother's, both of whom yet live."

"What was it, I pray you?" said Roskelyn.

"It related merely to the same event as the former; you may see it at the monastery at your leisure. The second prediction, though to the same purport was in different terms; it spoke of a victory gained by a bloody arm; the first of a willing captive."

Randolph started.

"I remember that well," replied the dowager: "I pray you proceed."

"My brave nephew slew the red mane!" exclaimed Roskelyn; "and his arm, I heard, was dyed in blood: yet is he no captive; the allusion therefore fails."

"It doth not," replied Monteith, rising from the lower end of the board, where Randolph sat next him. "Who can answer that question but the outlaws of Barra!"

"That can I," answered Sir Alexander M'Gregor: "Randolph was my captive. Assisted by my brother, I took him when he was so young, that his mind retained no impression. We gave him to St Clair Monteith, who adopted him; and my brother so well loved the boy, that, at his death, he left him heir to his estates."

"This is most true," said Monteith; "and time, together with his honour and affection, hath so woven him into my heart, that mine own children hold not a higher place in my love. Till this hour he was a stranger to this secret, which I wished to reveal before friends. Say, think you I have done my duty?"

"Most truly," answered Roskelyn. Then turning to Sir Alexander, he added—"I pray you excuse me, but is he English or know you his friends?"

"I do," replied the veteran; "they are noble Scots, and I mean to restore him."

Randolph started up—"If my father means to disclaim me," said he, warmly, "I will no other; the world is before me; I will quit Scotland for ever."

"You are wrong, noble youth," answered Roskelyn—"you may bring peace to a parent's breast. Proudly must they acknowledge one, who, though so young, is so forward in the road of honour!—Vain hope! who can recall the dead! Oh, if my son—"

"Behold him here!" interrupted Monteith, emphatically, at the same time laying his hand on Randolph's shoulder.

Astonishment dwelt on the features of all unacquainted with the secret, and deprived them of the power of utterance.

"Aye," added Sir Alexander, "behold the young Montrose of Roskelyn, taken from his grandmother on the moor near the English border!"

Roskelyn was too much oppressed to speak; but the dowager, more collected, replied, "If he be indeed my grandson, he bears a natural mark."

"He doth," said Monteith—"his arm is wine or blood-stained from the wrist to the elbow, which, showing in the field when his armour was broken, was mistaken for the latter."

Roskelyn gazed on the youth, as if he had never seen him before; at length, clasping his hands, he answered—"Heaven is just. Oh, Monteith, I forgive thee all but robbing me of the affection of my son!"

"Randolph," said Sir Alexander, "will never forget his duty, though, for the present, he is too lost in wonder to perform it. Bear up, Roskelyn—all is for the best. Thy son, bred in a court, had been a moth, a butterfly, while fostered in the rude winds of the Western Isles, he hath learned to be a man."

Randolph could not collect himself sufficiently to act as duty should have prompted, when Ambrosine approached him, saying in a low voice —"Beloved youth, consider Monteith and myself still as parents; but to the Lord of Roskelyn thou owest thy birth, and nature hath claims not to be denied by a heart like thine."

"Lady, I am yours for ever," replied Randolph, in the same tone. "Teach me, mould me to your will!"

Ambrosine led him to Roskelyn, who snatched him to his heart, exclaiming—"Brother, how severely hast thou been revenged! I have my right; take thou thine. I resign the domain of Roskelyn without a pang."

Randolph returned his father's embrace, and repeatedly received his blessing.

"Another duty is yet to pay to our kind mother," said Ambrosine. "A grandson still, lady; and if ye can love him better, I pray ye do. He justly deserves it."

The dowager embraced Montrose: yet a look of incredulity still marked her features. "If it be not too much, I conjure you, let me see your arm."

Randolph, for a moment, wished the mark obliterated; but gave the satisfaction she required.

"Monteith," said the dowager, "whatever I may think of this act, I own myself too guilty to complain."

"Lady," said Sir Alexander, "Monteith hath neither merit nor guilt to claim in this business—Lord Roskelyn, if your memory bears so far back, remember you the men who came from St Clair, with an order for money upon Carnegie?"

"I do," replied he, "and also remember they were rudely treated."

"They were," answered Sir Alexander; "and the M'Gregors are not to be affronted with impunity. Chance threw the opportunity of revenge in Randolph's way; I joined in the cause, and Montrose became the victim of—"

"His father's folly and injustice," interrupted Roskelyn; "but away with unpleasant remembrances."

"Randolph M'Gregor's soul," said Monteith, "was the seat of the most exalted friendship. Though happily not involved in my disgrace—for he was at the time absent—yet he shared our captivity, and did for me an act which for himself he would have declined."

"Ah, well, though long since, do I remember that fearful evening," said the dowager, "when Montrose was taken from me, yet cannot I entirely comprehend the motives."

"The motives, lady," replied James M'Gregor, "were various. Ample revenge was amongst the foremost. The infant might have been made the price of our freedom, had we been so inclined. Monteith's was the only dissenting voice against the act. He wished the boy to be restored unconditionally; but his opinion was over-ruled, and he was forced to yield. We mutually took an oath to support each other in the cause, and to keep it secret."

"Ay, Roskelyn," said Hamilton, "we resolved to put it out of your power to breed us up an enemy in your son, therefore educated him ourselves, and now glory in our pupil."

"In faith do we; for myself and sons," said Monteith, interrupting him, "I told you I resigned the domain of Roskelyn. It is Randolph's; and rather would I that he should enjoy it than any man under heaven. Nay, in justice it is his; for, had I been the acknowledged heir of Roskelyn, I had never inherited the estates of Monteith, which my uncle gave as a compensation for the deprivation I had sustained."

The discourse was considerably longer; and, in appearance, the most abstracted person was Randolph, who sat lost in thought. A pause

taking place, Randolph appeared to collect himself, and approaching Roskelyn, said—"Pardon me if, yet a while, I err in those marks of duty which I owe you; hereafter I trust to show that they do not spring from want of affection. With your leave I will retire for an hour. My head is even yet giddy with surprise: that time given to reflection, I shall be more myself."

Roskelyn pressed his hand, and bade him use his pleasure; when, having left the hall, Monteith immediately rose, and apologizing to his guest for a short absence, followed him. He overtook him on the portal.

"Randolph," said he, "I can enjoy no happiness while thou art sad. I have merely done an act of justice. Could I, for the glory of being thought thy father, bereave thee of thy birthright?"

"Alas!" answered Randolph, "in losing the name of Monteith, my being seems annihilated. Would I had been slain before this cruel secret was divulged!"

"Say not so. The Lord of Roskelyn's name is free from reproach; and the late discovery will diffuse a vigour into his conduct he never before possessed."

"But the countess," said Randolph: "can I pay to that woman the duty due to a mother?"

"Pooh, man! Though I like not to tear up subjects that should be forgotten," said Monteith, "remember mine, and thou hast the advantage. Consider, hast thou, in this discovery, no one reason for exultation?"

"Father," replied Randolph, "you probe my heart. What was the pride of my life, I am forced to relinquish. My beloved Phillippa, like myself, appeared heart-struck with this discovery."

"Ay, because like thyself, she took no time to consider the advantages that might accrue from it. On second thoughts, seest thou none?"

Randolph snatched Monteith's hand. "Noble, best beloved of men! were you indeed my father!" said he;" if you consent—if Phillippa—"

"Well," interrupted Monteith, gaily, "I will not pretend to misunderstand thee. If thou hast eloquence to persuade Ambrosine, let Phillippa be the pledge of friendship between us. But I neglect the duties of hospitality; join us as speedily as convenience suits."

As Monteith spoke, he shook Randolph warmly by the hand, and hastily left him.

Randolph found his thoughts relieved. To be Monteith's son was indeed to his heart most desirable; and that advantage would lose none of its value by owing it to Phillippa. These reflections gave him new life. He retired to his chamber, where, after remaining an hour, he returned to the hall with a mien so enlivened, that all congratulated him on the change.

His first duty paid to Lord Roskelyn, he seated himself by his side, and so far ingratiated himself with his father that the past omission was forgotten. At the time of retiring to rest, he attended him to his chamber, and received those testimonies of affection that had been restrained before so full an assembly.

Randolph's heart was touched. He returned his father's caresses, and vowed him future affection and obedience. Roskelyn's satisfaction was unbounded. To find a son after such an absence, and a son his whole

country concurred in admiring, was a joy almost too great for nature to support. He pressed him in his arms, wept with pleasure on his neck, and bade him command all he had freely, as the greatest satisfaction he could feel was to make him happy. Randolph kissed his hand, and, the first effusion of paternal affection over, said—"My dear father, to contend with the noble Monteith, when he is resolved, would be as unavailing as to contend with the waves of the sea, or, in truth, we ought to yield up the domain of Roskelyn, which, in justice, is his. However, to draw a line of some justice between us, I pray you let the revenues of the many years he was deprived of the estates of Monteith, be made up; they are not justly ours, and will hang heavy on my heart."

"My dear son," replied Roskelyn, "I have, before my departure for this happy visit, given orders for that purpose, and would willingly add the domain of Roskelyn; even then, with such a son as thee, I should think myself the richest man in Scotland."

"There is yet one thing," said Randolph, "that gives me pain. I fear my mother's hatred to the house of Monteith will lead her to expect from me a conduct towards them which I cannot submit to. In all duty I will obey her, but must forget to live before I forget to love them."

"It shall not be required. In all befitting her sex and rank, she shall command: but henceforth I will be master of my own."

"There was a proposal," said Randolph, "before this discovery took place, to unite the families: I would it might still take effect."

"As how, my son?"

"The Lady Ambrosine," replied Randolph, "I need not say, hath a daughter, whose beauty is her smallest perfection; and she alone can make me happy."

"Then may she be thine, and heaven bless your union! My consent you need not doubt, nor, I trust, Monteith's; for it will cement the family in bonds which will never be broken."

Randolph returned thanks to his father, and, after conversing till the night was far advanced, left him.

CHAPTER XLV.

At an early hour Montrose called on his father, and they then adjourned to the hall. Breakfast over, Roskelyn drawing Monteith and his wife apart, made the proposal for his son. Monteith smiled, but, with Ambrosine, gave his entire concurrence.

The family separated after different pursuits. Ambrosine and Phillippa retired, but were speedily joined by the chief. "I come a petitioner to you," said he. "I have received an offer for Phillippa, which I trust she will not refuse; at least, I hope she will give it a larger consideration than she did the suit of the Lord of Ronaldsa."

"Dear father," said she, "I had hopes these vexations would no more return, for it distresses my heart not to act to your wishes; and yet, indeed, I can never marry."

"Never is a long period," replied Ambrosine. "I know the party. He is unexceptionable in the eyes of all your friends, and one whose vows few women would refuse."

"I would he would bear them to where they would be more welcome.

Methinks he hath chosen an ill hour, when our family is busied with the late discovery. For my part, I think of nothing else; sleep hath not since visited my eyelids."

"Nay," said Monteith, "Montrose hath this union as much at heart as myself; wilt thou converse with him on the subject?"

"No, I pray you, dear father. He hath often wished to sacrifice me to Ronaldsa, though he knew I loved him not, and now means to persecute me with some of his new connections. I have been wicked," said she, weeping; "for I shame to say I loved Randolph best of all my brothers, and I am properly punished. Last night my heart bled for his distress; but this morning he appears perfectly satisfied. No doubt he will soon forget us all."

"I do not believe it," said Ambrosine; "but you stray from the subject. You cannot form a decided opinion, with justice, without seeing the party."

"Dear mother," answered she, "never on any other subject shall you complain of my disobedience; but on this, I pray ye, spare me: person, rank, wealth, nay, even merit, cannot alter my resolves."

"I grieve to hear it," said Monteith, "and feel disappointed, as will also my brother Roskelyn, who warmly wished to cement the union of the two families by this tie."

"What tie, father?" replied Phillippa, with astonishment.

"Nay, my good girl," returned he, gravely, "never shall it be said that any family motive influenced me where thy happiness was concerned. I am indeed grieved for the youth, for, in truth, he hath loved thee since his early infancy; and when he spoke of uniting thee to Ronaldsa, his heart and honour were not in unison."

"Dear father," said she, blushing, "but did you indeed mean Randolph?"

"Undoubtedly; but thou wouldst not give me time for explanation. Talk further on this business with thy mother, and she will convey thy denial to our Randolph in softer terms than I might use; for well I know it will vex him almost to death."

As Monteith spoke, he quitted them, when Phillippa, throwing her arm round her mother, said—"I would sooner die than vex Randolph! Is not my father cruel, lady, to deceive me so? I thought he meant some fearful, strange man like Ronaldsa."

Ambrosine could not suppress a smile. "A part of thy objections are then done away," said she.—At that moment a gentle stroke on the chamber-door announced an intruder. It was Randolph. "Beloved friends," said he, "in your presence my heart seeks to find a resting-place; and my most honoured father, Monteith—for I can call him by no other name—told me ye were alone, and would pardon me."

"Willingly; I joy to see your mind more collected than yesterday."

"It is; but the happiness of my life must ever depend on the house of Monteith. My dear Phillippa hath been in tears. Perhaps you have told her my wishes, and she declines them. If so, I pray you let the subject cease; for true affection deals not in persecution."

"Randolph," replied Phillippa, "is it right to doubt my affection? More justly ought I to doubt thine, who could wish to unite me to Ronaldsa?"

"Ah, Phillippa, hadst thou seen my heart!"

"We know it now, my dear youth," said Ambrosine; "let that suffice. Phillippa, I shall say to thy father thou wilt consider on the business he spoke on this morning. Say, is it not so?"

"As your kindness shall direct, dear mother."

"Well, then, for the present I leave ye. The entertainment of our guests must be attended to; and the dowager hath been left since breakfast."

Montrose so warmly urged his suit, that Phillippa's objections were soon vanquished; and the happiness of the family increased by her avowal that she should no longer contend against the commands of her father.

The utmost joy reigned within the castle, and the days passed in feasting and pleasure. One night, a domestic entered hastily, whispered the chief, who immediately left his guests, and found the Lord of Ronaldsa supporting a fainting female.

"Ronaldsa, my brave youth," said Monteith, "what means this? Bring ye us a wife? If so, she is welcome."

"My noble friend," replied Ronaldsa, "no wife, but a cruelly used daughter, who claims your protection, if her father should have left you."

Monteith snatched the torch from the table where it stood. "Amazement! Matilda!" exclaimed Monteith, "at this time of night too, without female attendants, and pale, sick, and disordered! What may this mean?"

"'Tis no time for relation," replied Ronaldsa. "For two days and nights she hath been on horseback, without rest or food, save some matchet and wine, which I almost forced her to take. Let it suffice—you know the Lady Roskelyn. If you doubt my honour, I am here."

"I do not doubt it: but astonishment overpowers me. Call," said he to one of his vassals, "the Lady Ambrosine, who will prescribe for this poor sufferer."

"Is my father here, dear uncle?" said Matilda.

"He is; but he had better not know of your arrival till to-morrow, when your strength may be recruited, and both better prepared for the meeting."

"I thank you. It will indeed be best."

As she spoke, Ambrosine joined them. Her surprise equalled her husband's; but, ordering refreshment and rest for her, she coincided in her husband's opinion of remaining silent till the morning.

A general order being given for the arrival of strangers not to be noticed, no word transpired.

CHAPTER XLVI.

In the morning Matilda was so far recruited that she entreated her father would visit her; praying, at the same time, the presence of her uncle, with the dowager, Ambrosine, and Phillippa.

Astonished at what he heard, Roskelyn flew to her, and giving scarcely a moment to her changed appearance, demanded how she came to forsake the protection of her mother.

"My life upon her truth!" said Ambrosine; "give her time and she will explain all to your satisfaction."

"Dear father, I am not to blame, and will truly relate all that has

happened. My mother, though confined to her chamber, has been well acquainted with all that has passed, and among other circumstances, was told that you wished to unite me to young Monteith—a union which, she vowed, was there no other way to prevent, she would slay me with her own hand.

"This violence began even the day you left us. That same afternoon she informed me her cousin, Sir John Stuart, would that night sup at Roskelyn. He came, and his attentions were so pointed that I could not misunderstand their meaning. They, however, gave me but little concern, for I well knew you would not approve of such an alliance. On the morrow, my mother gave me to understand he was the man she had chosen for me, that resistance was fruitless, and that I should be privately married in the chapel of Roskelyn. In vain I pleaded your absence, and my denial served but to increase her anger. She said that Sir John Stuart was her nearest of blood, and had the most right to me, her only child. Her words made me sorrowful, but I assumed courage sufficient to say no power should force me to wed without your consent.

"Sir John was constantly with us, and she never suffered me from her sight, or I should have endeavoured to fly to you. One morning the Lord of Ronaldsa was announced. My mother whispered to her cousin, who left the hall, and then ordered Ronaldsa in.

"Having paid his respects, he said he came to crave her commands, as he was to depart in three days for Monteith, where he understood you then were.

"She replied she had none, but that he might inform you all were well at home.

"I regarded this as the only opportunity I should have, and resolved not to let it escape; therefore, under pretence of more light to work at my embroidery, I took my seat at the window at the extremity of the hall. As the Lord of Ronaldsa passed me, he bowed, and, rising, I said aloud—'I pray you present my duty to my lord and father;' then added in a lower tone—'Tell him to fly to his child, or she is undone.'

"Though the utmost astonishment marked his features, he replied—'I will bear your message truly, lady;' and again bowing, he left us.

"Near evening, my mother said she should ride to Leith, and bade me prepare to accompany her. I foresaw some scheme, but was far from suspecting its extent. I, however, was obliged to attend her. Sir John Stuart and four of his men alone escorted us, and it was beyond the hour of vespers before we reached the chapel, which stands at a short distance from the shore.

"The lone situation, the hour, the company, all filled me with dread. I was scarcely able to stand. 'Dear mother,' said I, ''tis past evening prayer; I pray you enter not the chapel.'

"'Foolish girl,' replied she, 'come on, this hour decides thy fate; my enemies shall not triumph in my death, for the wealth of Roskelyn shall enrich the sunken fortunes of my father's house.' As she spoke, she drew my arm under hers; Sir John took the other, and resistance was vain. We entered the chapel, which was only lighted by a few tapers, which served to show a priest, standing at the altar, holding a book. The whole of the plan now struck me. Among the vassals of my father's house, such a scheme of violence would have been impracticable, but here I had no friends, and must fall an easy prey."

Roskelyn, whose anger was raised to a pitch of fury, could hear no more; in the bitterness of his heart, he invoked a curse on the head of the woman he had so many years idolized, and vowed never more to hold converse or friendship with her.

In the warmth of the moment, Monteith applauded his intentions, but Ambrosine, chiding both, said—"Remember, she is mother of two children, who do honour to human nature. Proceed, dear niece—say only, did you escape the accomplishment of the wicked design? and all will be more calm to wait the conclusion."

"Do so," said Monteith; but shrink not Matilda; thou hast friends to repay the injury ten-fold. If thy enthralment was completed, blood shall obliterate the affront, and set thee free from such accursed vows!"

"The virgin be praised, no sacred ties bind me," replied she; "from them my soul is clear; though, alas! I fear not from blood!"

"Proceed, my love," said Ambrosine, "if the blood of the guilty has fallen, innocence sought it not, and the forfeiture be on their own heads!"

"We entered the chapel," resumed Matilda, "and were instantly joined by an old priest, who loudly declaimed against disobedience; but I was too much agitated either to pay attention to his discourse, or profit by his instruction. I vehemently protested against their intentions, and called upon the priests to answer before Heaven their forcing a child to wedlock against the will of her father. They were deaf to my remonstrances, or too well instructed and paid to listen to them. I was dragged to the altar; the priest opened his book; my mother called on him to use despatch; Sir John seized my hand, which I struggled to get loose; and the sacrilegious rites began. Patience had forsaken me, and my reason would speedily have followed, had not my mind suddenly been diverted into another channel. Sir John Stuart's men stood on the outside of the chapel, from whence the sound of contention and struggling caught my ear; and, the moment after, six armed men rushed in and ran up to the altar.

"'What do you here, at this late hour?' said the principal. 'Secrecy and darkness betoken guilt. A daughter of the house of Roskelyn hath need of neither. Speak, lady,' said he, turning to me, 'why is your father absent at such a moment? Act ye against his will?'

"My spirits appeared instantly to return. I recognised the Lord of Ronaldsa, and felt relieved from danger. My mother spoke, but was almost inarticulate from passion. 'My lord,' said I, 'my father is far distant. My mother disregards the cries of her child, and I have no friend!'

"'Your uncle's friend, lady, is devoted to serve you. Speak how it may be done, and you shall be obeyed.'

"'Oh, if it were possible to bear me to him! There only can I be safe!'

"'Come on, then,' said he, snatching my hand from the grasp of Sir John Stuart, who still held it. 'Fear nothing. I will conduct you safe to his arms.'

"Surprise, as I conjecture, had hitherto kept Sir John silent; and my mother (I tremble at the recollection), overpowered with weakness and rage, leaned over the altar for support, her features swollen with passion,

and every limb agitated. Heaven forgive me for being the cause of her anger! it was an involuntary offence, and proceeded from fatal necessity."

"Matilda," interrupted the Lord of Roskelyn, impatiently, "conclude thy story, and to prayers afterwards."

"I will; but indeed the conflict was terrible; Sir John, with many invectives, half drew his sword; but either fear, or the anathema which the two priests denounced against such deeds, prevented him using it; and Ronaldsa and his men, whose weapons were all unsheathed, surrounding me, I was in a moment borne from the chapel.

"I heard my mother scream, and would fain, on a second thought, have turned back; but, in this case, my deliverer was deaf to my entreaties; I was placed on my own horse, and we instantly departed.

"We had proceeded but a short way, when we discovered Sir John and his men in pursuit of us. The Lord of Ronaldsa commanding four of his men to pursue their way with me, made a stand; and the moment after I heard the clashing of swords; but my guides urged such speed, that we soon lost the sound.

"As I should judge, we had advanced about two miles, when the Lord of Ronaldsa and his followers again joined us. I was unable to testify my fears; and, during the night no explanation took place.

"Early in the morning we were forced to rest and feed our beasts, and he obliged me to take some refreshment, and then, at my request, informed me that he had wounded Sir John Stuart, though not to death.

"Of my mother, he knew nothing since we left her in the chapel. He also told me, that, on the day he received the message from me at Roskelyn, he despatched letters to my uncle with the purport, as he was not himself prepared to depart immediately."

"None such have arrived," said Monteith, "or we should have lost no time in hastening to you."

"The fatigue I underwent during the journey, is more than I can describe, for I refused to make more stay than was necessary. Such is my account, dear father; only say you are not displeased with me."

Roskelyn embraced his daughter, as did the whole party; after which, Monteith and his brother left them to enquire further particulars from Ronaldsa.

"Dear lady," said Matilda, addressing Ambrosine, "pardon me: but did you not allude to my mother having two children?"

Ambrosine informed her of her affinity to Randolph.

"Can it be possible," exclaimed she, rapturously, "that I have a brother, and such a brother! When this is known, who will dare to insult Matilda?"

Ambrosine, smiling, said—"Matilda, you have found a brother, but he will rob you of half your wealth."

"No, lady, he will increase it beyond all price. Oh! how I long to see him—to tell him how sincerely I love him! Sweet Phillippa, though the advantage be mine, I almost pity you for losing such a brother."

Phillippa blushed, but made no reply.

"Is there no relationship as near and dear as that of sister?" said the dowager; "if there be, Phillippa may perhaps hereafter claim that to Montrose."

"I understand you, lady; Phillippa will be my sister," said she,

throwing her arms round her neck; "and I will love her dearly Methought, last night, I was the most unfortunate of all creatures; but this morning I am one of the most happy."

"If, among the relations I possess, I feel sorrow and pity for any," said Ambrosine, "it is for the countess of Roskelyn, who voluntarily deprives herself of enjoyments that gladden every other heart."

"Fie upon her!" replied the dowager, "name her not. I rejoice to see my son Roskelyn hath at length shaken off the fascination that so long hath disgraced him."

"My poor mother, alas! I fear," said Matilda, "is fast hastening to the grave; never shall I forget her countenance at the chapel—so pale and discoloured; I would I had gone back! yet sickness and a view of death seemed rather to render her more firm to her purpose than to move her from it. Dear lady," said she, taking the dowager's hand, "remember her only as the mother of the gallant Montrose, and all other remembrances will give place."

Ambrosine was charmed with the duty of Matilda, and observing that she still looked pale and languid, with the dowager, soon after retired, leaving Phillippa alone to attend her.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Though Monteith and Roskelyn had no doubt of the veracity of Matilda, they resolved to hear the account of Ronaldsa; and both paying him such thanks as the service rendered required, entreated him to favour them therewith. With the candour and openness that ever accompany true honour, he immediately complied, and began as follows:

"I need not repeat why I remained in the city, the disbanding of the troops not being completed. Daily some were discharged, and received a sum sufficient to take them home to their families; among those was one, whom on paying him his stipend, I immediately recognised for the son of a vassal of my deceased father, who for some offence had been banished the island. The poor fellow finding he was known, appeared confused; but, as the son could not with justice be condemned for the error of his father, and had, moreover, been severely wounded in the battle of Sark, I spoke to him with a kindness that speedily obliterated unpleasant remembrances. His father, he informed me, had been in England, where he engaged in the service of Sir John Stuart, who was now in Scotland, on a visit at the castle of Roskelyn. He added, that his father had never been happy since he left Ronaldsa, and, in short, testified so much attachment to his native land, and the service he had been accustomed to, that I was wont to tell him, as *he* had been a brave soldier, I pardoned his father for his sake, and that he might return to his country and old allegiance, as speedily as he found it convenient. The gratitude of the youth, whose name is Robert, was unbounded; he fell at my feet, and the whole concluded by my engaging him to remain in my service.

"On the ensuing day, I received the personal thanks of the father, whose wife I found was yet at Ronaldsa; and, giving him a small sum, I bade him hasten thither, telling him all past was forgotten, and, if deserving, he should find me his friend.

"The master-key to the human heart, when not entirely corrupt, is gratitude; and though undesignedly, I had opened his, he threw himself at my feet, and begged me to counsel him in what he was about to transact; as he knew I was, if not materially concerned, at least attached to a family of near affinity to those whom it would affect. In short, he informed me, that his master, Sir John Stuart, had come from England in consequence of an invitation from the countess of Roskelyn, to wed her daughter; but the young lady refused, the match being the project of the countess, unknown to her lord.

"I confess, I scarcely at first gave credit to what I heard; I however questioned him narrowly, and at length learned, that the countess having no son, was said to be resolved that the wealth of her daughter should centre in her own family. Pardon me, but, from some circumstances I had heard relative to the temper of the countess, I was not prepossessed in her favour; and interrogating the man further, with promises to reward him, if he merited my protection, he added, that Sir John Stuart had a small vessel off the harbour at Leith; and, did not the Lady Matilda consent willingly, such means, he suspected, would be used, as must enforce compliance. Having learned all I could, I dismissed him with a present, telling him to be careful in conveying me all the information he could; and, for that purpose, I sent his son Robert to be in the vicinity of the castle.

"Giving the night to reflection, I resolved, though unknown to the countess, to visit Roskelyn, under the pretence of inquiring whether she had any commands to her lord. There I received a short hint from the lady Matilda, who appeared agitated and pale, which resolved me to become an active agent in the business.

"On my return to the city I instantly wrote an account to the chief Monteith, at the same time assuring him that I would consider myself, as far as possible, the brother of the family, until the lord of Roskelyn or himself should arrive."

"Yet I have received no such letters," interrupted the chief.

"The reason I cannot conjecture," replied Ronaldsa, "for I despatched the advice by the most trusty of my vassals—a man whose honesty hath never been impeached."

"'Tis strange," answered Roskelyn; "but I pray ye proceed."

"I will. The father of Robert, anxious to win my favour, even that night, after I had been to Roskelyn, sent his son, who called me from my bed to inform me that from some cause, but what his father knew not, the business was suddenly hastened—the vessel was ordered to be prepared, and he suspected from words that had dropped from Sir John, that a marriage was to take place immediately, after which they were to embark for England till the first confusion arising from such a step had subsided. The lady Matilda, he added, was still firm in her refusal, but the countess, if possible, appeared more and more resolved, and the match was too advantageous to Sir John to be declined.

"However I might feel that I had no right to interfere, I considered there was none near of kindred on the spot, and therefore resolved to take the measures I thought necessary. Robert assured me, should there be occasion, his father would join me, and that, for himself, he was devoted to my service; to these men I added four more, whom I stationed the ensuing morning in the woods of Roskelyn. In the afternoon I joined

them, when I learnt from Robert that all the baggage of Sir John Stuart had that day been conveyed on board his vessel, and his men were ordered to be ready early in the evening to attend him.

"Robert was our spy, and at sunset he joined us, and, almost breathless with haste, informed us that the countess, with lady Matilda and Sir John, were set out on horseback for Leith. We lost no time, but, spurring our beasts, followed, and reached them some few minutes after they entered the solitary chapel that stands near the shore. I rushed in, and saw force was offered to obtain the Lady Matilda's vows; no father or brother's presence sanctioned the act, and the duty of a man called upon me to protect her."

"Generous Ronaldsa," interrupted Roskelyn, "how can I ever sufficiently thank you?"

"Name it not; I was happy to rescue her. The countess, apparently sinking on the pavement, called upon her to return; but I refused to let her comply, and placing her upon her horse, which stood at the entrance of the chapel, we lost no time. Sir John speedily followed. His men, by the interference and persuasion of Robert's father, had hitherto made no resistance. He called upon me to defend myself, but soon fell, as I fear, mortally wounded, though I concealed that circumstance from the lady Matilda. I much feared she would have sunk under the fatigue she underwent, but I could not persuade her to rest by the way. I sent one of my vassals to the soldiery, with a letter to the principal commander in my absence, desiring him to detain them a few days. Robert and his father, with my own men, attended us, but, for the safety of the poor fellow who was to have conveyed my letter to the chief, I have the most anxious fears, for I know him to be faithful. You now are informed of every particular. If what I have done meets your approbation, I am satisfied; if otherwise, my motives, which were disinterested, must excuse me."

The praises which Monteith and Roskelyn bestowed on Ronaldsa gratified the youth, who was speedily informed of the discovery respecting Randolph, and their intention to unite the families in yet stricter bonds by marriage—"Thou must do me the justice, noble youth," said the chief, "to avow I wished to call thee my son; and would now that I had another daughter who might be more sensible of thy deserts than Phillippa, but, accustomed from her cradle to Montrose, he became, even unknown to herself, master of her heart."

"Generous chief, I thank you," replied Ronaldsa, "and perforce must yield to what cannot be avoided; of all men, I am least inclined to envy the friend whom I regard above all others."

Montrose, who, with James Monteith, De Bourg, and others, had risen early to the chace, at that moment entered the hall. Informed of what had passed, all highly applauded Ronaldsa, while Montrose, embracing him, said—"Dear friend, pardon me; I am an innocent rival; my heart and that of Phillippa, like two of the southern rose-buds, grew together by the mere impulse of nature, and to separate one, I am convinced, would have been death to the other."

"Happy may you be!" replied Ronaldsa; "the love which meets no return, fades, as doth the tree which meets no kindly rain to nourish its root. That I could have devoted my life to the lady Phillippa is most true, but her inclinations were uncongenial, and I shall now rejoice to see

her happy to her own wishes. Though born in the frozen isles of Orkney, I have a warm heart, Montrose, and am resolved never to wed, unless I can gain a heart in return for mine."

"Fairly determined," replied Monteith; "I honour thy resolution, and predict it will lead to happiness."

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of one of the vassals, who informed the chief that a messenger, exhausted with the speed he had made, craved admittance on business of the utmost import.

Monteith commanded him to be brought in, when a peasant appeared, and, presenting a letter to the chief, said—"Noble master, the true bearer of these despatches lies dangerously ill, within a few miles of Falkirk, where he was thrown from his horse, and so violently bruised on the head, that, for nearly two days, he lay without recovering his reason, on the first return of which, he conjured me, his host, to bear these letters to you, and commendations from his noble lord."

"My letters!" exclaimed Ronaldsa; "they have indeed come late; but, my honest friend," added he, addressing the peasant, "thy zeal is the same; let my faithful servant lack no kindness or help, and here is my purse to repay thy care—I pray thee is he better?"

The stranger replied in the affirmative, and Monteith giving him into the care of his vassals, ordered him to be particularly attended to.

The letters to Monteith accorded exactly with what Ronaldsa had related, and the thanks of the lord of Roskelyn were again renewed, till they became painful to the youth. De Bourg at length, with his usual humour, interrupting the discourse—"Pooh!" said he, "empty thanks may be compared to tantalising a hungry fellow with a fair feast, carved in wood, or moulded in wax, beautiful to the eye, but repugnant to the stomach. In this case, were I the Jason who had borne off the golden fleece, by my life, nothing less than keeping the prize should satisfy me."

"De Bourg," replied Monteith, "either thy honesty, or the impudence of thy country, makes thee declare openly what others only think or wish; but enough on the subject; Ronaldsa blushes like a girl, a denial to thy opinion."

"Not so," said De Bourg; "you may be a good soldier, St Clair, but for knowledge of the human heart, you are a mere green-horn. When men blush, it is from the warmth of their hearts; when they turn pale, it is from a contrary emotion: and my purse to thine, in this case, I have guessed rightly. Ronaldsa shall be umpire between us."

"Agreed," replied Monteith.

"Nay, then, chevalier," said Ronaldsa, "the purse is yours. If I did blush, it was not the result of coldness; I have not, in faith, contemplated the beauties of the amiable and gentle Matilda for two days with impunity; and, could I hereafter win her heart, and gain the approbation of her father, I should still be happy."

"I never lost a purse so willingly in my life," answered Monteith; but what says my brother, and our Montrose, to this business?"

"Why in faith," replied Roskelyn, "I can only say, that if the parties agree, I will swear that the castle of Monteith abounds with blessings, since it hath given me two of the most gallant lads in Scotland."

"And I," said Montrose, embracing Ronaldsa, "shall accomplish my long-wished purpose, by a means that will give joy, instead of sadness, to my heart—that of claiming Ronaldsa as a brother."

The young lord returned the salute, when Montrose claimed permission to see his sister, which was immediately granted.

"Nay, come with me, Ronaldsa," said he; "thou hast at least acted a brother's part by Matilda, and may surely claim a brother's thanks."

Ronaldsa needed no second invitation, and they adjourned to the gallery, where, causing Matilda to be informed they waited to see her, she, with her cousin, speedily joined them.

The artless joy with which Matilda received her brother, and the blushing thanks she bestowed on Ronaldsa, were not without their effect on both their hearts; the first found her, in his mind, superior to all the women he had ever seen, the Lady Ambrosine and Phillippa excepted; while Ronaldsa, at every glance saw fresh charms, which made her, in his eye, superior to either; he compared her person mentally with that of Phillippa, and found it on the whole equally beautiful and more to his liking, from the gentleness of her demeanour, and the gratitude she expressed towards him.

Matilda, though weak and languid, joined the party at dinner. The anger of the Lord of Roskelyn against his countess caused him now to be in no haste to make her a sharer in his satisfaction, and Montrose felt at once too happy at Monteith, and too much displeasure against her, to press his father to hasten his departure.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

In the bosom of friendship and the soft enthralment of mutual love, some days had passed at the castle of Monteith, when the peace was broken in on by a special messenger with despatches, informing the Lord of Roskelyn, that his countess lay at the point of death. The dutiful Matilda not only testified, but in reality felt, more grief on the occasion than any other person; but the Lord of Roskelyn had lately gained a perseverance not to be easily moved, and he resolutely refused to let her leave Monteith.

Accompanied only by Montrose and Ronaldsa, with their dependents, he departed on his journey; and, leaving the young lord in the city, he, with his son, proceeded to the castle of Roskelyn; but, ere he reached it, the black banner, waving over the gate, foretold that their errand was fruitless.

"Gracious Heaven!" exclaimed he, "is it indeed thus! Unhappy Ellen, the saints be merciful to thy soul! I trust thy punishment was on earth; for thou hast died unblessed with the tidings that thou wert mother to such a son."

Montrose, however he might think of his mother living, in death felt the claims of nature on his heart. "Dear father," said he, "in this case I know not how to speak to comfort; but if from your children a double share of duty can soften the loss, both Matilda and myself will pay it."

"I doubt it not," replied Roskelyn; "cruel and unfeeling as was thy mother, in spite of my reason I loved her, yet, after her conduct to Matilda, resolved to live with her no more."

On reaching the castle, they found the countess had died the evening before. On losing Matilda in the chapel of Leith, she had experienced a second paroxysm from the ruptured blood-vessel, but had been conveyed

back to Roskelyn in a litter, where, after languishing some days, her revengeful and vindictive spirit had taken its everlasting flight. Even in the sorrow of the moment, the exultation of the Lord of Roskelyn could not be entirely suppressed, when he announced the youthful Montrose as his son to his vassals. In their hearts, whatever might be their outward semblance, pleasure reigned; for the countess was too much disliked to be truly mourned by her dependants, and the open mien and mild demeanour of Montrose gave the promise of a kind ruler.

Ronaldsa, who in the city had learned the death of the countess, hastened to join his friends at Roskelyn, where he remained till the rites of the church, and the duties of the dead, were fulfilled; after which they resolved to return to Monteith.

On inquiry, they learnt that Sir John Stuart, though severely wounded, had survived and returned to England—an information that gave pleasure to all.

Passing Stirling, they paid their duty to the sovereign, who testified his satisfaction at the events which had transpired, and congratulated them on the intended union of their families, promising them that he would interest himself to procure the consent of the church.

Apprised by a messenger of the death of the countess, they, on their arrival at Monteith, found the first effusion of Matilda's grief settled into a calm melancholy. At first she had accused herself of hastening her mother's death; but the second paroxysm seizing her at the chapel of Leith being concealed from her knowledge, the mild admonitions of Ambrosine had in time their full effect; and, daily assisting for a month in the mass that was said for her soul's rest, she at length became composed.

Monteith who saw that all parties would be better for a change of place, and the variety of travelling, proposed a journey to Kintail, which was accordingly agreed on and executed.

From thence they proceeded to the fortress, spreading comfort and assistance among the islanders, who declared that from this visit, they were convinced that their beloved chief, uncorrupted by courts, had not forsaken them. From the Hebrides they sailed to the Orkneys, where, after passing a short time at the castle of Ronaldsa, they returned to Scotland, visiting the estates of their several friends in the way.

The dowager accompanied them during the whole excursion; frequently declaring, that such happiness had lately been her lot, that she looked upon herself as the most blessed of all parents. To her intentions in regard to the young St Clair, she firmly adhered, making him heir to all she possessed, as she truly observed, the demesnes of Roskelyn were amply sufficient for Montrose, and those of Monteith for her grandson James.

Matilda was not deaf to the vows of Ronaldsa, though she claimed a year's probation to be given to the memory of her mother—an arrangement in which Ambrosine supported her, and in which Montrose, however against his will, was obliged to coincide. That time elapsed, in which the consent of the church was obtained, the parties were united in the presence of the king, who loaded them with gifts, and showed them every mark of honour and respect.

Universal rejoicings through the different domains took place; the brothers, united by the marriage of their children, bespoke a tie doubly

strengthened, and which was yet more strongly cemented, in the course of a year, by the birth of a son to Montrose. By the request of Roskelyn, the child bore the name of Randolph, in commemoration that his father had so long and honourably used it.

Matilda also became a mother; and never had she cause to repent her confidence in Ronaldsa, who, mild as brave, in the husband never forgot the lover.

The dowager, during her life, passed some months every year with her different relatives, bettered by their example, more prepared, and less afraid to die.

Amidst the rising virtue and bravery of their children, Monteith and Ambrosine grew insensibly old, the pride of their vassals, the scourge of the oppressor, and the protectors of the needy; like meteors, drawing a bright track to direct their posterity to follow.

The friends of Monteith were seldom many months absent from him, though Ross, Hamilton, and M'Gregor, resided on their different domains; to the last of whom Montrose generously insisted on giving up the bequest of Randolph, but which was as generously refused.

De Bourg remained the chief's constant companion, increasing years damping none of his natural vivacity.

Roskelyn, enervated in youth by the false tenderness of his mother, from the example of Monteith, shook off his weakness, and became truly dear to the chief, and honoured and beloved by his son.

For Montrose and Phillippa—from their infancy warmly attached to each other, marriage only joined their hands, whose hearts long before had been united; no discordant passion vexed them; but, after the example of Monteith and Ambrosine, each ruling without either feeling the sway, mutual truth, faith, and love, sanctioned the pleasures of their youthful days, and rivetted an affection, which neither time, chance, nor age, could destroy.

DUNN AND WRIGHT, PRINTERS, WEST NILE STREET, GLASGOW.

THE HEIR

AND

THE USURPER;

OR

THE DUCAL CORONET.

A ROMANCE OF ITALY IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

BY

SYLVANUS COBB, JUN.,

AUTHOR OF "THE STORM CHILDREN," "THE LOST HEIR," "THE SEA LION,"
"THE TEXAN CRUISER," ETC.

GLASGOW: CAMERON AND FERGUSON,
88 WEST NILE STREET.
LONDON: 12 AVE MARIA LANE, PATERNOSTER ROW.

THE HEIR AND THE USURPER.

CHAPTER I.

THE VILLA AND ITS INMATES.

"Dear brother, do leave your pencils and your palette, and come forth upon the terrace with me and see the glorious sunset."

These words were addressed by a beautiful girl to a person who, though still young, was many years her elder, and who, clad in a dark velvet tunic, and wearing a cap of the same material, sat before an easel in a darkened apartment, busily engaged in the completion of a female head of exquisite loveliness. The earnest speaker, though a daughter of Italy, had not the dark eyes and hair and the deep complexion that usually characterize her countrywomen. On the contrary, her skin was white and transparent as the marble of Carrara, her eyes light blue, and her hair flowing in waves of gold over her shoulders. It was the Saxon type of beauty. Still her figure, though she could scarcely have seen eighteen summers, had that full and early development which only belongs to a daughter of the south. Her brother, though resembling her somewhat, had the true national stamp in the manly beauty of his face. His hair was black as a midnight wave, and escaped from his cap in broad statuesque curls, his eyes were dark and lustrous, his complexion very dark, and his features pure in outline, though bold and striking. His figure, as he rose to his feet, and laid aside the implements of his calling or amusement, appeared tall and well moulded, and there was something almost regal in the grace of his attitude and movement.

"You are ever my dear, judicious monitress," he replied, with a smile. "It is getting too dark to paint, and I am afraid my last touches have rather injured my performance. What say you, Estella?"

"You never do anything amiss, Giulio," answered the fond girl, "and I see nothing but perfection in that lovely face. But you have never told me the subject. Is it a Madonna? The meek expression—the soft pitying purity of those eyes—would make me think so, and yet the dress is almost of our times."

"It is not a Madonna," replied Giulio, with a half sigh.

"Who is it, then? There is a strange fascination in the face. Is it a dream or a memory?"

"It is painted from recollection."

"Then, brother, sometime you shall show me the original."

"You will never see her on earth," said the painter, sadly, as he drew a curtain before his picture, after a last, lingering gaze at his handiwork. "But come—or we shall lose the golden glory of the sunset."

The brother and sister left the apartment, descended a stairway, and stood upon the highest terrace of the villa of Monte Rosa. It was an old edifice, with two square towers built of stone, and perched upon a little plateau, near the summit of a considerable elevation of land, and facing the south. Behind it rose a dark forest that crowned the mountain. Before it, terrace on terrace, planted with fruit trees, with vines and flowering shrubs, with here and there a white vase gleaming among the shrubbery, the territory descended, till the garden merged in a wide tract devoted to agriculture; and far down in the valley was seen a cluster of peasants' cottages, reflected in the river that flowed through it, while the land again rose abruptly and wooded on the other side of the valley, nearly to the height of Monte Rosa. From the latter, a brawling torrent, affluent in numerous springs, descended to meet the river in many a turbulent cascade, crossed here and there by rustic bridges, built rather for ornament than use, for the stream was but a single pace in breadth. The whole scene was suffused now in the matchless glow of an Italian sunset, which burned in the west in cloudless glory, bronzed the heavy woods and feathery shrubs, and made the mountain torrent and the river in the valley glow like streams of molten gold.

"Estella," said the young man, after they had both gazed for some moments in silent admiration on the scene, "how poorly does a scene like this make us think of art! How impossible it is for the pencil and the colours to counterfeit glories like those before us! The world is enraptured at the master's landscape—but he himself feels how far short he falls of the original, and blushes at the praises of his skill."

"And yet you devote many hours to your art, brother."

"Yes—I require variety of occupation. I cannot always be in the fields superintending my labourers, nor in the forest hunting the boar, nor in the plain flying my hawk. I should find time hang heavy at those seasons when the weather confines me within doors, were it not for some such pursuit"

"Yes—you would soon tire of my poor company," said the girl, reproachfully.

"Never, dearest Estella," replied the young man, "never, unless I were weary of myself—and Heaven knows that happens frequently enough."

"Then you must have some secret grief, Giulio, that you have never imparted to me. I confide all my thoughts to you—but you—you are moody and abstractive oftentimes Surely you are not poor?"

"Poverty is one of the lighter ills we have to contend with. No, Estella, I—rather we—have broad and productive lands, that my skill has increased tenfold in value since I came into possession of them; my peasants are industrious, contented, and love me, there is a bit of forest, where, on my soil, I can hunt the wild boar, and none to forbid the ringing of my bugle, and the footfall of my steed."

"Why, we are rich, brother!"

"Wealth is comparative, Estella. If I look below me, I am rich indeed; if above me, I am poor."

"Then why not look below?" asked Estella.

"Because I come of a race trained like the eagles, to look upward—not to the lowly valley with its admirable peasants' huts, but to the mountain height crowned with feudal battlements, over which the silken banner, blazoned with arms in gold embroidery, flaps defiance at the foe."

"I, too, have been taught to look upward," said Estella, meekly; "but I look beyond the battlement and banner, and see only the serene smile of heaven itself."

At that instant the sound of a convent bell from the valley far below them, stole upward like a prayer. Both of the listeners bowed to its influence, and side by side they kneeled and prayed. When their devotions were ended, Giulio led his sister to a seat, and then said:

"You questioned me just now about you picture—Estella, it is the image of your mother. Who scarcely saw you, sister," continued the young man, with emotion. "The date of your birth was that of her death She but pressed her wan lips to yours, gave you to our father's arms, and died."

"And our father?"

"He followed our sainted mother to the grave in a few weeks, broken-hearted. His last request was that you might be educated in the convent of Our Lady of Mercy. At the age of sixteen you were to decide whether you would come out into a world so full of trouble, or pass the remainder of your life with the peaceful sisters. I need not say with what joy I learned that you wished to abandon your life of seclusion, and with what delight I welcomed to the walls of Monte Rosa, as its mistress, so charming a companion."

"And it may please you to know that your little sister is perfectly happy here, Giulio."

"Perfectly?"

"Except when I see a shadow on your brow, brother. But you have only told me half your tale. Your skill has produced on canvas an image of our mother—so that I already know her features by heart—you must paint our father one day, but in the meanwhile, tell me what manner of man he was."

"He was taller than I am, Estella, and erect as a standard staff. As I remember him, his close cut curls were black, with threads of silver. Splendour of attire well became the elegance of his person—but to my eyes he never looked so glorious as when he was sheathed in steel from head to foot, and reined with a light hand the barbed steed that curvetted beneath his weight."

"Then he was a soldier?"

"Ay, Estella, and a leader of soldiers—while I—I only command a few peaceful peasants, and perform no higher achievement than couching my spear against the spring of a wild boar."

"Is war the only pursuit worthy of man's attention, brother?" asked Estella, reproachfully.

"No, dearest, there are other spheres worthy of ambition. There is the council chamber. Is it not something to manage the affairs of a wide territory—to develop the resources of numerous subjects—to foil the cunning of neighbouring potentates—to make wise laws, and, what is more, to enforce them? I administer a little estate—my father ruled over a wide domain: I am lord of Monte Rosa—my father was Duke of Parma."

"Our father is dead—why are you not Duke of Parma?"

"Because a villain has stolen my right, Estella; because the Parmese ducal coronet rests on the brow of an usurper."

"And that usurper?"

"Francisco Veroni—our father's brother, our uncle, a man that our poor father loaded with favours, with whom he shared his heart and purse, his table and his palace. It were long to

tell you, Estella, how, even during the life of our father, that bold, bad man tampered with the people and the troops—how the odium of every severe measure was made to rest upon our father's shoulders, the merit of every favour claimed by this man. You cannot yet understand the wiles and machinations and treacheries of bad men. Here it is needless that you should do so—did we enjoy our rights it would become you to study them."

"Then I thank Heaven that I am not Princess of Parma," said Estella, fervently.

"Hush! hush! Estella. Do not tell me that, now I have given you a glimpse at the glories from which we have fallen, you are content to lead this ignoble life here."

"I have known no other. Let me enjoy it. And now that I have the secret of your unrest, dear brother, let me conjure you to lay aside all thoughts of your wrongs and the evil deeds of others, and adapt yourself to your present condition."

"I have essayed to do so," replied Giulio. "And since you came hither, I thought I had succeeded, and that Giulio Brigaldi—for my ancestral name, even, was denied me—the painter, farmer, vine-dresser, hunter and student, might be quite as happy a man as the wearer of the ducal coronet of Parma. But I am afraid I have deceived myself—a single spark suffices to kindle the pride of birth and fire of ambition. I am ready to gnaw my heart out like a prisoned wolf—and you know I *am* a prisoner, Estella."

"How so, dear brother?"

"The usurper assigned me this domain, banishing me from his court, and forbidding me to enter a foreign service. Hence the glorious career of arms and the equally glorious career of diplomacy are closed against me. I must vegetate here, within a brief ride of his capital, so that if I show the slightest symptom of rebellion, his bravoes can surround me and make me prisoner. Malediction! what a defence I could make here, if my peasants had not hearts of hares. I could easily turn the parapet of the villa into battlements, and plant them with culverins, loophole the walls for musketry, have a store of rocks to roll down on the invaders, and then, if it came to the worst, and they overcame my defences, it would be but a match to the magazine, and good-bye to Monte Rosa."

"O, pray, brother!" said Estella, "do not abandon yourself to these wild fancies. Do not try to fancy you are unhappy here—and if you dwell on the usurpation, remember that in its own good time Heaven punishes the wicked and rewards the

good. We have many blessings, if we have not power—let us enjoy them."

"You are right, dear sister," said Giulio, "and I stand rebuked. My wild fit has passed, and my ordinary philosophical mood returned. I *was* ungrateful—I am no longer so. But the mists are rising from the valley, and there is a chill in the air. Go in. Blame me not if my bugle breaks your slumber at an early hour to-morrow. I am bound for the chase."

CHAPTER II.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN.—THE DUKE AND THE EQUERRY

FROM country to city, from the villa to the palace—let us hasten on the swift wings of fancy. At sunset we stood upon the slope of Monte Rosa: the night has passed—morning, bright, dewy and effulgent, has dawned upon the earth, and we have now passed the threshold of the most closely-guarded apartment of all Parma—the cabinet of its duke. In the hall without, halberdiers are pacing to and fro; night and day they keep watch and ward over the repose of their sovereign lord. In that hall from nightfall to daydawn torches blaze in their sockets, throwing their ruddy glare upon steel corslets and gleaming pikes. When the prince goes forth, it is between walls of steel—troops line the streets when he rides abroad. And when he goes to church, clad in the silken and velvet robes of his rank, and wearing, to the popular eye, a serene and smiling aspect, next to his heart he wears a coat of Milan steel, curiously fashioned by a cunning artificer, and so finely wrought and tempered as to turn the point of an assassin's dagger, should an impious hand be raised against the life of the Lord's anointed. And Francisco Veroni, Duke of Parma, sees that hand raised at every moment of his life—for the imagination of an unjust man is ever haunted by spectres. Guilt is constantly conjuring up the phantom of retribution. Sumptuous is the fare beneath the weight of which his table groans; yet fears he that death lurks in the tempting viands spread before him; so that of no dish dares he partake until his chamberlain has first eaten of its contents. Yet he has for some years enjoyed his usurped authority unchallenged. No attempt upon his life has yet been made. His brother's son lives in exile, and no powerful friends have raised their voices in his

behalf. Why then, should not Duke Francisco eat, drink, and be merry? Because for the criminal there is no real enjoyment, because the worm that never dies cannot be quieted by music, by feasting, by wine, by pomp or luxury.

But let us pass the threshold of his cabinet. It is sumptuously furnished; hangings of crimson velvet with gold bullion fringes swing from the gilded cornice to the floor, curiously wrought in mosaic of many coloured and perfumed woods. Against this dark background stand, on richly carved pedestals, beautiful statues of snowy marble, some the handiwork of modern artists, others the work of those immortal Greek sculptors whose skill has never yet been equalled. The daylight streams in many colours through a high window of stained glass; the furniture is richly carved and gilded; every article is costly and tasteful.

In a richly carved chair, beneath a splendid canopy, sat a man past the middle age, attired in a robe of purple velvet richly embroidered with gold, one hand resting on the arm of his chair, the other playing with the chased hilt of a dagger. The long locks that escaped from his velvet cap were thickly threaded with grey, yet there was nothing venerable in his aspect. He was approaching the confines of age, without deriving from years that dignity which commands universal homage. His features were regular and even noble, yet there was a sinister expression in the mouth and eye, a mingled sensuality and cruelty which chilled and repelled the observer without awing him. His dark eyes rolled restlessly in their orbits, and there was an habitual contraction of the brows which indicated physical or mental pain.

The Duke of Parma was not alone. Standing before him in an attitude of respectful deference, was a young man of fine figure and handsome countenance, with bright hazel eyes, rich brown curly hair and moustache, and a glow of health in his cheeks which contrasted strongly with the sallow and livid hue of the duke. The young man held a plumed hat in his left hand, and wore a pair of golden spurs upon his heels, for he was the duke's equerry, or master of the horse, as well as a relative. He bore the name of Ferrado Montaldo.

"How slept your grace last night?" inquired the master of horse.

"As usual, kinsman," replied the duke, who generally adopted a familiar tone in his private conversations with this young man. "Sleep and I are becoming strangers. Or if sleep, coaxed by the wine cup, does visit my eyelids, it comes attended by such a troop of dreams, that, faith! I prefer a wakeful night."

"Your grace must be unwell."

"My physicians tell me otherwise. They say I have no bodily ailment. Yet they tell me I must take more exercise. How is the weather to-day? Does it promise well for our sport?"

"A glorious morning, my lord. There's not a cloud in the sky. You will trace the falcon in his flight far up in the stainless blue, and lose not a motion of his wing as he sweeps upon his prey."

"And you bade the huntsmen be in readiness?"

"The whole train has been ordered, my lord. Your attendants are already in the saddle. The beaters are ready for their work. The falconers sit with the hooded hawks upon their wrists, and black Astolfo is stamping with impatience in the courtyard."

"And our daughter, the Princess Margarita?" asked the duke.

"She hath signified her intention of riding forth with us," replied the equerry, "and her horse is saddled beside yours. We shall have glorious sport, my lord. In what direction will you be pleased to ride?"

"Towards Monte Rosa."

"The villa of Giulio Veroni!"

"That name!" cried the duke, a dark frown, like a cloud, passing over his sinister countenance. "No one now bears the name of Veroni but myself. But you mean," he added, with an attempt at a smile, "Brigaldi—the untitled tiller of the soil, the amateur dauber, the exile, my hopeful nephew To think his doting father once dreamed of bestowing the coronet of Parma on *his* brows!"

Ferrardo looked down and was silent.

"Why are you so mute, man? stricken dumb in a moment!" pursued the duke. "Are you thinking that this boy ought to have filled the throne we occupy?"

"Nay, my lord, I was thinking only of the ordering of the hunt to-day."

"I believe on my honour your soul is utterly engrossed with your employment. It is well. I would have such men about me," said the duke. "Yet you must help me in my need in other ways than seeing that I am well mounted. Know, then, Ferrado, that something more than chasing the heron and hunting the wild boar enters into my plans to-day."

"Indeed, my lord!"

"Yes—and it is fitting that I give you some inkling of the part you are to play."

"Your grace may always command my poor services."

"Of course, my good kinsman—for have I not made you all that you are? I found you a poor relative; I have given you rank, occupation, and emolument. You are not overtaxed. Your purse is ever full, you wear fine apparel, you ride forth as well mounted and appointed as myself. There is no limit to the fortune of a man on whom the sunshine of a prince's favour falls. When he inclines to wed, he may raise his eyes to any height. Ay, my good Ferrado, even should he covet the hand of a princess." The duke watched his equerry narrowly as he uttered the last words with marked emphases, and smiled slightly as he noted the colour mounting in the young man's cheek, and animation sparkling in his eyes. "Tell me," he continued, "could you have hoped for any such fortune, had yonder exile ruled over Parma instead of myself."

"Your grace has been my benefactor—my best friend—I owe you all!" replied the equerry. "Only tell me in what way I can serve you. My head, my heart and my hand—every faculty of my being—are yours."

"I trust you—I trust you entirely," said the duke. "You shall see that I place implicit confidence in you. Come nearer, Ferrado. Think you my throne is firmly established?"

"It is impregnable," answered the equerry.

"And yet the rightful heir lives!" said the duke.

"Your authority is acknowledged without a murmur. Your brother's hold upon the people was weakened before he died. The nobles, the masses acquiesced in the bold step by which you grasped the reins of power and gave them a firm government. Even the Duke of Milan did not protest against it. Surely, after so long an undisturbed enjoyment of your authority, you cannot now doubt its stability!"

"My brother's son yet lives."

"He lives in exile," replied the equerry, "in contented exile, so says the popular rumour. He divides his time between the culture of the lands your grace's bounty bestowed on him, the sports of the chase, and the pursuits of an artist. His vineyards are flourishing, his rooms are crowded with pictures by his own hand—would this be the case if he were a discontented, ambitious aspirant?"

"You reason well, Ferrado," said the duke.

"And again—must he not feel that he owes his liberty and life to your grace's favour?"

"You remind me," said the duke, gloomily, "that I might have held him in a dungeon, or given his head to the block."

"Pardon me, your grace, but extreme measures like those, would not, in my opinion, have been politic, granting that self-preservation authorised your adopting them. Instead of martyrdom, you gave him exile—instead of a dungeon an estate. It was the wisest plan—it disarmed his friends."

"They are only quiet, Ferrado, so long as he is contented."

"And he is so, my lord. Report speaks him quiet and happy."

"We must not trust to hearsay," said the duke. "And this brings me to my project. We shall hunt to-day in the direction of Monte Rosa."

"We shall find the game abundant, my liege."

"No matter for the game—that is merely a secondary object. You must contrive to separate yourself from us to penetrate the enchanted abode of the exile."

"That is not difficult, my lord. It is protected by neither walls nor gates."

"You must contrive to see this Giulio, and that by chance. Let it not appear to be a premeditated interview. You have strayed from your companions, you will say, you are thirsty and crave a cup of wine; frame any plausible tale that may occur to you as an apology. Speak to him; win his confidence, as you know how to win it, and learn his feelings, his views and his intentions."

"My life upon it, my lord, that you will find him contented with his lot."

"Pray Heaven, it be so; for his sake as well as mine," said the duke. "If it be otherwise, I will find a way to crush this young eaglet. I have tasted the sweets of power, and will not abandon them except with life. Ferrado, I have not forgotten the old life I led as a dependant on the bounty of my brother. Think you that I could bear to resign this state, the environment of guards, the salutations of the people, the wealth of the treasure-house, and all that wealth procures me? No—though there be dreams that haunt my slumber—though there be phantom shapes that stand and mock me in the shadows of the hangings when night comes down upon the palace—though I see the shadow of the assassin falling across my path."

"These are but evil dreams, my lord."

"They are! they are!" cried the duke. "They vanish in broad daylight, do they not? Wine has the power to dispel them, has it not?"

With these words the duke raised a golden goblet, brimming with wine, from the table, and carried it to his lips.

But as he was about to drink, he shuddered and turned deadly pale.

"Ferrado," he said, almost imploringly, and extending the goblet to him, "will you be my taster?"

"Willingly, my lord," replied the young man, and bowing low, he received the goblet from the hands of the sovereign, and quaffed a draught from it before returning it.

"Behold one of the conditions of high estate," said the duke, with a bitter smile. "The peasant churl drinks without a fear of the juice of his vine—but the crowned monarch must timorously sip the leavings of a subject's cup. Envy me, Ferrado. To your health"

The duke drank off the wine, and set down the empty goblet on the table.

"There is a fire in that Xeres," said he. "It warms my blood. And now to horse. I will drive these shadows from my brain."

Escorted by his equerry, and joined by his nobles in the antechamber, the Duke of Parma descended through glittering files of halberdiers to the courtyard, which presented an animated scene—horses pawing with impatience, dogs yelling in their leashes, plumes waving, spurs jingling, and hawk-bells tinkling on the trained falcons. Radiant in beauty, and brilliant in attire, Margarita, the duke's daughter, sat upon her snow white palfrey, which she reined with consummate grace. The duke saluted her kindly as he vaulted into his saddle. The bugles rang out a merry blast, the great gates of the courtyard were thrown wide open, and forth rode the trampling cavalcade amidst the vivas of the populace of Parma. Ah, how few of the envious crowd that gazed upon that goodly company were aware that beneath those smooth brows and smiling lips lurked agony and care! The countenance of the duke himself was particularly radiant, and he lavished his sunniest smiles upon his loyal subjects.

CHAPTER III.

THE FAIRIES' GLEN.

On one of the sides of Monte Rosa was a glen, a deep furrow ploughed by the hand of nature, and extending far down the mountain side. It was a singularly romantic place. The luxu-

riant soil that covered its sides had given birth to a multitude of trees, embracing every variety peculiar to the latitude. They clustered on the ridges of the ravine, and stealing down into its depths, plunged their strong roots into its dark stony heart, so that even at noonday, there were points in the glen where the green arch overhead was so dense as to be almost impervious to sunlight, and to make a midnight in the lonely dell. But it could never be said to be gloomy. From early dawn the birds were singing in the leaves, and after sunset the plaintive nightingale took up the thread of melody, and continued it till morning. Nor was this the only music of this enchanted spot. From the head of the glen poured down a little mountain streamlet, now springing like a chamois from rock to rock, now gliding swiftly and noiselessly along like a bright serpent, now scattering into a hundred threads, and now uniting into a broad circling pool. The pool was often black as night with tree shadows, but sometimes a gleam of sunshine, penetrating the interstices of the foliage, would dart into the sullen water, revealing its very depths, just as a sudden glimpse of fortune in the life of a lonely man brings forth qualities, the existence of which you never suspected. It would have been a weird place at midnight but for the smiles of the moon, whose light trembled in patches on the surface like glimmering silver fish But the loneliness of the fairies' glen, for so it was called, was not unfrequently invaded. In the pool the heron came to drink, but scared by a sudden noise, would expand his wings and glide away, his long legs trailing behind him, for a bridle road wound through the whole extent of the glen, which it entered by the summit, and following the course of the stream in a zigzag direction, crossed a rustic bridge that had been thrown over the torrent, and then came down the other side of the water. Unlike the passage of Avernus, the ascent of this road was safe and easy, the descent precipitous and even dangerous.

The reader will now suppose himself transported into the heart of this lovely and romantic glen, on the very morning ushered in by the last chapter. The place was as solitary as if the foot of man had never intruded there, and indeed, the evidences of his handiwork in the bridge across the stream and in the road were so slight that you might imagine that both had been produced by the unaided will of nature. The rustic bridge might have been a clump of trees casually thrown across the water by a tempest; the road might have been the dry furrow tracing the path of some former torrent. The small birds twittered among the

dewy branches, the fishes leaped in the pool, breaking the dark steel mirror into silvery flashes, and overhead, seen through the opening of the trees formed by the little lake, the sky was serene and cloudless. It looked an unwritten page of Arcadia. The hush was that sort of summer stillness which is not absolute silence—for as gentle airs stirred now and then, the leaves whispered to each other, and myriads of insect wings made their small music heard. The throbbing of the great heart of nature is always audible, except in those lonely deserts or those Siberian wastes where she appears at times to be parched or frozen to death. Still, if not perfectly silent, the murmur of the stream was slumberous and quiet. A deer might have drank fearlessly of the water, without once pausing to listen if danger were at hand.

Suddenly there swept across the pool the shadow of wings. A large bird darted over it, and instantly glided off over the upper part of the glen. Swift as an arrow from a bow followed a second bird in pursuit—a small, fierce creature of the hawk species—and almost simultaneously a horse crashed through the branches at full gallop. The rider was a bold one who forced him across the stream and up the rocky bank, but that rider was a woman. With her long hair floating on the breeze, caused by the rapidity of her motion, her eyes flashing like diamonds with excitement, her rosy lips parted, the Princess Margarita followed the course of the heron and the falcon up the glen. Without a moment's hesitation she dashed over the bridge that a man would have crossed warily on foot, and disappeared through the trees.

"Heavens! she will be lost, if she rides at that rate," cried a man emerging from the bushes. He was dressed in a hunting suit of green velvet, with a silver bugle hanging at his side, a white plume in his hat, and a light spear in his hand. It was no other than Giulio Brigaldi.

"I should have warned her," he added, addressing a companion who now made his appearance.

The second comer was fantastically attired in a parti-coloured dress of red and yellow. On his head he wore a cap of the same colours, decked with silver bells, the token of his calling—for this queer personage was no other than a fool or jester, in those days an indispensable attendant of a man of rank.

"I should have warned her, should I not, Tonio?" he repeated.

"To what purpose, master of mine?" replied Tonio. "They say a wilful man must have his own way, and I am sure on't a wilful woman must. You can as soon stop a runaway horse

with a bit of straw and a rein of packthread, as hinder a woman from following her whimsies."

"You malign them, knave. You are always speaking ill of women."

"It is but returning the compliment, then," said the jester.

"Go up the glen, sirrah," said Giulio, "and post yourself in the pathway of the stone cross, and warn the lady, or any other rider, not to return by this road. It were perilous."

"To think of *my* running after a woman to hinder her breaking her neck!" said Tonio to himself, as he scrambled up the rocky pathway, and disappeared in the distance, to execute his master's mandate.

Giulio leaned upon his spear musingly.

"What a vision of beauty!" thought he. "Who would have dreamed of these solitudes being blessed with such a dazzling image? Who could she be? She was splendidly attired, and in her cap she wore gems worth a duke's ransom. Yet they were dim in the brightness of her eyes."

As he gazed mechanically in the direction which the lady had taken, the sky was suddenly darkened. Down swept the heron, with the falcon above him in full pursuit.

"Bravely flown, my gallant hawk!" cried Giulio, the ardour of the sportsman banishing every other emotion for the moment.

But the current of his thought was speedily changed by the re-appearance of the princess. She came down the dangerous path at full speed, with a careless rein, her eyes raised to view the progress of the chase. Giulio dared not shout a warning, for fear of starting her horse. He could but wait the result of her rashness in breathless agony. The horse passed the bridge safely, but at the sudden turn of the rocky path, he missed his footing, fell, and, as he rolled over, the fair rider was thrown into the torrent, and instantly swept like a floating feather to the pool. The whole scene occupied scarcely a minute, and almost before that period had elapsed, Giulio had plunged into the lake, and seizing the precious waif, had borne her in safety to the bank. How he hung over her lovely face, watching her return to consciousness! It was not long before she opened her eyes, and perceiving a stranger bending over, the colour mounted to her late pallid cheeks.

"Where am I?" she asked, gazing around her.

"Safe, lady," answered Giulio. "But I fear the consequences of this plunge in the cold stream."

"Nay—it was an unasked-for bath. Nature is bountiful to me," said the princess, with a slight smile.

"But your garments are dripping," answered Giulio.

"The sun will dry them," replied the lady.

"Nay, lady. If you will permit me to offer you the poor shelter of my house, your wants shall be cared for."

"It matters not, signor. I must rejoin my friends," said the lady. "Where is Orlando?"

The question annoyed Giulio. Was he already in love? Did his heart beat at the mention of a supposed rival?

"Orlando?" he repeated.

"Ay, signor--my horse."

The reply was ready. The animal was near at hand, quietly cropping the grass by the side of the path. The princess held out her tiny hand and called. At the sound of her familiar voice the beautiful animal raised his head, and after gazing at her for a moment with his bright eyes, trotted up to her side and put down his head for the expected caress.

"Ah, Orlanda!" said the princess, "you are a good and faithful servant. But I taxed your powers too severely, or rather, you missed the hand that should have sustained you when you fell."

"Let me," said Giulio, who gazed upon the princess with increasing interest. "permit me to repeat my offer. Let me urge you to accompany me to my villa. You shall be waited on by female attendants, and a blast from my bugle will summon my sister to minister to your needs; she is riding in the forest."

The princess appeared to hesitate, as she glanced from the speaker to her wet garments.

"Is it far hence to your villa?" she asked.

"But a short distance, signora. Nay, you must have seen the towers of Monte Rosa as you approached the glen.

"Monte Rosa!" exclaimed the princess. "Methinks I have heard that name before."

"It is a retired abode, with no pretensions to more than comford," said Giulio.

"And Monte Rosa is your residence, signor?"

"It is."

"You, then, are—" said the princess.

"Giulio Brigaldi, at your service, signora."

"I—I—have heard your name," said the princess, with a confusion she could ill conceal. "Men speak of you as a skilful painter and farmer."

"I am proud of their commendation," replied Giulio, biting his lips. "Yes—the pencil and the pruning knife are my implements, and at a time when the sword and lance are grasped by

manly hands. But enough of this. I shall be happy to offer such comforts as the villa affords."

"I thank you with all my heart, signor. Next to Heaven, my thanks are due to you for the very breath with which I coldly utter them; and to-night when I kneel at the Virgin's shrine, to pour out my gratitude for my deliverance, your name will mingle with my supplications."

"I am more than repaid for an involuntary act," answered Giulio.

"The time may come when I may be able to testify my gratitude," continued the princess. "Now I can only thank you in words, while I decline your offer. Nay, urge me not. My friends are hunting in the forest. I shall soon be with them. A note upon this silver whistle will bring my attendants to my side."

Giulio's whole frame thrilled as he lifted the princess to her saddle, and placed the rein in her hand. He even fancied that she pressed his hand. She certainly blushed as she bowed to him and wheeled her horse, and once more she looked back before she disappeared from view, and smiled a kind farewell.

"No longer," said Giulio, "shall I pursue the ideal in my day-dreams. It is found—brighter, fairer far, than any vision that ever dawned upon my path. O that my skill were equal to my wishes! Such a face should beam upon the canvas, that the world would pay it homage as my heart does now. Who can this enchantress be?"

Thus musing, he slowly ascended the glen, and crossed the bridge. As he emerged from the denser portion of the road, he encountered Tonio, his tawdry finery soiled with dust, and his garments in a state of strange disorder.

"How now, sirrah!" cried his master. "Can you give me a good reason why I should not break every bone in your worthless carcass with my spear-staff?"

"Do it! do it!" cried the jester. "The wise man's body is ever the butt for the fool's blows."

"What mean you, rascal?"

"I mean yon will-o'-the-wisp on horseback ran away with your wits when she caused you to send me up the glen to stop her progress to destruction. Here I stood, like a sentinel on duty, to say that no one could pass the line—when, slam! bang! the first thing I knew I was rolling in the dust, with a vision of horse's heels passing over, and the long garments of a flying witch trailing on the wind."

"Poor fellow! I forgive you," said Giulio.

"It is very easy to forgive those we have injured," said the jester.

"Get you to the villa, Tonio," said Giulio, "and here's compensation for your injuries," he added, giving him a piece.

"There's no ointment for broken bones like gold," said the jester. "One can pocket any affront in this shape."

With these words he retired, leaving Giulio to indulge in day-dreams—for he was in love. Enthusiastic, impressionable, imaginable, more of a poet than a practical man, it was not difficult to interest and excite him, and the person and manners of the princess would have moved a statue.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CROSS OF GOLD—THE WARNING AND THE SPY.

In another part of the forest, Ferrado, who had dismounted from his horse and sent him away in charge of a groom to a certain spot, which the duke had indicated as a rendezvous for his hunting party, was slowly pacing the shaded footpath, reflecting upon the mission with which he had been entrusted by his master, and revolving the manner in which he should acquit himself thereof. As he thus advanced, with his eyes fixed upon the ground, he suddenly discovered a sparkling object half hidden by the grass. He picked it up and examined it. It was a small golden cross of elaborate workmanship, covered with minute carved figures, which the skill of Benvenuto Cellini might have been proud to acknowledge. He turned it over in his hand, and saw the name of "Estella" engraven on the back. The lustre of the ornament was undimmed, and it had evidently been but just lost by the owner. While he stood contemplating the cross, a horsewoman, whose approach the velvet turf had prevented him from hearing, suddenly reined up before him. He looked up and gazed with involuntary admiration on the exquisite beauty of the fair apparition. The lady, on her part, somewhat disconcerted by the close attention of the courtier, blushed deeply, a circumstance which added to the effect of her charms, already flushed by exercise.

"Signora," said the equerry, respectfully, "I am induced to hope that in you I have found the owner of this little article," and he extended the glittering cross he had just been contemplating.

"It is indeed mine, signor," replied Estella. "That cross is one of my highest-prized treasures—it belonged to my mother. I missed it this moment, and turned back in the forlorn hope of finding it in the path I had just traversed."

"It gives me great pleasure to be the means of restoring it,' said Ferrado, bowing.

"I thank you most heartily, signor," replied the lady, as she received the ornament; and then, bowing to the stranger, she wheeled her horse round and prepared to ride off.

"Stay one moment, lady," said the equerry, anxious to prolong the interview upon any pretext "I am seeking the villa of Monte Rosa, and this wood is a perfect labyrinth. Perhaps you can direct me thither."

"You were in the right road," replied Estella. 'You have only to follow the path, you will soon come to an opening in the wood, from which you will see the towers."

"Are you acquainted with the inmates, signora."

"I am one of them, signor," replied the lady.

"Indeed! then you can perhaps inform me whether Signor Brigaldi is at home?"

"My brother went forth early this morning," replied Estella. "But he should be returned by this hour. If he is not there, I will send one of the servants for him. Addio, signor."

And bowing to the equerry, the fair equestrian touched her horse and cantered off through the greenwood.

"She is a glorious creature!" thought Ferrado. "Born to grace a court. Which of the dames of Parma can compare with her in attraction? I ever thought the duke's daughter a peerless creature; but beside this lady, her beauty would be lustreless. Estella! I shall see her again, perhaps, at the villa."

With this reflection he resumed his walk. Ferrado was peculiarly susceptible to the influence of female charms, and was, moreover, just of the age when beauty exerts its greatest sway over the human heart. The vision of loveliness imparted a new charm to his existence; the day seemed brighter, the sunshine more golden, the air more perfumed. Perhaps it would have been better for the success of his diplomacy had he not encountered this radiant fairy. Beauty has more than once foiled the arts of a practised politician.

Meanwhile Estella rode on towards the villa. She, too, had been favourably impressed by the appearance of the cavalier she had just encountered. He was handsome, courteous, and richly attired; and accustomed as she was to see herself surrounded only by peasants, she could not fail to note the contrast he pre-

sented to those men of toil. He realized, or, at least, approached very near to that ideal of an accomplished suitor which she had dared to dream of in her lonely reveries. And what girl of eighteen, at least what Italian girl, has not such day-dreams? If Ferrado had the person of Romeo, Estella had the passionate heart of Juliet.

Musing on this little adventure, she had insensibly drawn her bridle-rein, and was walking her horse along the velvet pathway, when she met her brother coming in an opposite direction. She blushed scarlet, scarce knowing why.

"You here, brother!" she exclaimed.

"You appear very much astonished, Estella. Pray, where should I be?"

"O, I thought you were at the villa."

"It is not unusual for me to wander for hours in the woods on such a day as this.'

"Well, brother, there is a cavalier going there to pay you a visit."

"How did you know that?"

"I met him by chance inquiring his way to the villa."

"What manner of man was he?"

"I did not take particular note of him," (O, Estella!) "but he was a gentleman, richly dressed in a hunting garb, and he wore golden spurs."

"'Tis he! Where is he, Estella?"

"He is following this path on foot"

"Very well. Ride on to the villa. I will join you there before long."

"Shall you bring the cavalier with you?"

"Perhaps—I cannot tell."

Estella rode on, hoping that she should before long again meet the stranger.

Now, a few moments before Giulio had encountered his sister, he had met a groom in the forest, who, after inquiring his name, gave him a note and immediately rode off. The note contained the following lines:—

"Forewarned, forearmed. You are an object of suspicion to the Duke of Parma He has sent a spy to interrogate you, Ferrado Montaldo, his master of horse, a dark-haired man, wearing a gold bugle horn and golden spurs. If you are discontented with your lot, conceal it from him. Foil Italian diplomacy by Italian shrewdness. I cannot say how much depends on your discretion. Destroy this as soon as read.

"YOUR FRIEND."

Giulio obeyed the injunction, tore the missive into minute fragments, and scattered them to the winds, curious to know who could have thus become interested in his fate and fortune. At first he thought the warning might be a jest, but his brief interview with his sister dispelled this idea. He hastened, therefore, to meet the spy, dismissing every trace of suspicion from his countenance, and wearing the serene expression which was habitual to him. He had not advanced many paces from the spot where he had encountered his sister, before he saw the master of horse coming towards him. Ferrado, as he approached, paused and raised his cap in salutation.

"Can you inform me, signor," he asked, "if I am in the right direction for the villa of Monte Rosa?"

"This path leads directly to the villa, signor."

"I am in quest of the owner," said Ferrado

"I am at your service," replied Giulio.

"What!" exclaimed Ferrado, with a joyous air. "Am I indeed addressing Giulio Veroni?"

"That is a name I have renounced, signor," replied Giulio, calmly. "I am known as Giulio Brigaldi."

"Pardon me—I cannot forget that you are entitled to a name intimately associated with the historical glories of Parma. Let me make myself known to you. My name is Ferrado Montaldo. Straitened circumstances compelled me to take service under the reigning duke. I am his kinsman, and consequently yours. Give me your hand, my dear cousin. We should have met long ago."

Giulio accepted the offered hand of his kinsman, and shook it warmly.

"Come," said he, "you must see how I am lodged in the Villa Rosa. It must never be said that my kinsman was within arrow-flight of my house and went away without drinking one cup of wine, or breaking a morsel of bread with me. My sister, too, will aid to make her kinsman welcome."

"The temptation is very great," said Ferrado, with apparent hesitation. "I have met your sister. She is indeed charming, cousin. But you forget I am a slave, Giulio. The very spurs upon my heels are not given me that I may ride where I will, but that I may hasten to obey the mandates of a—tyrant—yes! that is the word, kinsman. In your ear, I may breathe it without fear of the consequence. I escape from the ducal retinue in the hope of gaining a brief interview with you, but I must not go out of ear shot of the duke's bugles. He is a hard taskmaster."

"You do him injustice, Montaldo. Report speaks him a good

ruler. It is said that the people of Parma were never so happy as under his sway. A judicious management of the finances has lightened the taxes of the people. The reigning duke is not immoderate in his pleasures, he has placed good judges on the bench, he has kept peace with his neighbours, at the same time that he has repelled aggression, not by force, but by dignity and firmness."

"All this is true to a certain extent," said Ferrado, "though if I were disposed to contest the point with you, I could easily show that you have exaggerated the merits of the sovereign. But it matters not how good a use he has made of his power—he is a usurper."

"There are times when men of ability are justified in grasping the reins of power," replied Giulio. "Usurpation is palliated by the acquiescence of the people governed. You forget that I was a mere boy when my father died."

"Why did not Francisco administer the duchy as regent during your minority, and resign the throne to you when you came of age? You inherited the blood and talent of a noble race; the ducal coronet of Parma was and is a prize worth grasping."

"An empire is worth nothing, if the heir has no ambition."

"And do you tell me that you have no ambition, Giulio?" asked Ferrado, fixing his eyes keenly upon his kinsman.

"Yes—I have ambition," answered Giulio. "I desire to transmit my name to posterity; I were else unworthy of my lineage. But there is more than one path to fame. Think you the ruler or the soldier monopolizes the glory of this world? Is it nothing to paint like Raphael or Michael Angelo? Is it nothing to be a poet? Is it nothing even to cover these hillsides with vines and fruit trees and flowers?"

"In truth, you have a noble estate here."

"I hold it from my uncle."

"Very true," replied Ferrado, with a sneer. "He robbed you of the whole duchy, which was yours, and gave you a mountain side to vegetate upon! Truly you ought to be very grateful."

"A man has always enough when he has content."

"I cannot think of your wrongs without indignation!" said Ferrado. "You, a noble, tilling the soil like a peasant! You, gifted and learned, wasting your time in daubing pictures! You, trimming vines and planting olive trees, when you ought to be reining a war-horse, and leading the Italian chivalry to deeds of prowess! How can you exist in such a state of mediocrity."

"My dear kinsman," replied Giulio mildly, "you forget that a fall is most to be feared in the loftiest station. The blast that

prostrates the tall oak but bends the flower at its foot. Books have served me in lieu of experience, and I know that greatness is but another word for care and unrest. I am under obligations to the duke for sparing me the miseries and temptations of a more exalted station."

"Do you never think, then, of the injuries he has inflicted on you?" asked the persevering Ferrado.

"I think only of enjoying this peaceful villa, which contains within its narrow limits more than you can find in gilded palaces. What pictures can compare to the thousand ever varying and ever charming views that nature presents? What canopy of Genoa velvet so rich as this elm which droops its pendulous branches ever glorious in the wealth of its unrivalled verdure? What Venetian mirror truer, brighter than the pools in the greenwood? What broidery of fair hands can equal the myriad flowers that gem the velvet turf? None of these grow old; they renew themselves annually without cost. Those riches, which are not subject to the vicissitudes of fortune, are dearer to me than those which you seem to imagine I regret."

"Do you not desire to triumph over a cruel avidity?"

"All my desires are confined to the enjoyment of the blessings of the country, and to the continuance of the sweet society of my sister. Nature never deceives my hopes."

"Is it possible for a man to forget to this extent that he was born to reign?" exclaimed Ferrado.

"Power is a vain dream. Of all worldly vanities, what does man really possess? Food, clothing. Why should I crave for possessions I could not enjoy?"

"Solitude has made you a misanthrope."

"On the contrary, it has made me a philosopher. But enough of this. Will you walk to the villa?"

"No, no, Giulio. I should fear a spell would come upon me. I like fine garments, fine horses, lovely ladies, splendid pageantry, the glitter and whirl of the court circle. I should stifle in these solitudes. But I may take occasion to visit you."

"You will be always sure of a welcome."

"That I doubt not, and I thank you for the offer."

The equerry raised his bugle to his lips and blew a call. In a few moments a mounted groom appeared, leading a saddled charger. Without touching his foot to the stirrup, Ferrado vaulted into the saddle, and giving the spur to his horse, rode away.

"Farewell, minion of the court!" said Giulio to himself. "A few such specimens of the satellites of power, willing slaves, and

I could indeed be content to pass my life in these solitudes. Nor should I ever crave place or power, the throne or the battle-field, had I a partner in my lot; such a one as this lady of the Fairies' Glen. Shall I never see her again? Yet how unlikely that we shall ever meet. She is evidently one of the ladies of the court, and I am forbidden to set foot in the city. I could almost risk my head on the chance of meeting her again. But I must curb the swellings of my heart, and learn to endure my lot."

CHAPTER V.

THE ASTROLOGER AND HIS PATRON.—THE MIDNIGHT MARCH.

In the cabinet of Francisco Veroni, the usurping Duke of Parma, there was a certain panel in the wainscoting, concealed by the rich hangings, which was furnished with a spring that, on being pressed, the panel slid back, disclosing a narrow, winding stairway. In fact, the ducal palace was a perfect labyrinth of secret passages, places of concealment and acoustic apparatus for conveying a whisper from one part of the edifice to another. The passage to which particular allusion has been made, conducted to the apartments of a learned man, in the employ of the duke as his astrologer. Superstition still attributed to the stars a mysterious influence over the destinies of men, and to the fallen science of astrology the power of fathoming those starry influences and of reading in the combinations and movements of the heavenly bodies the story of their fate. There was something flattering to the vanity of the great in the belief that their destinies were recorded on the crystal battlements of heaven in letters of undying fire. No honours, no treasures, were too great for the gifted one who possessed this pretended gift of divination, and the learning, which would have been neglected by the ignorant and brutal princes of the dark ages had it appealed directly for their support, was encouraged indirectly under the guise of astrology, so that the accurate science of the present day owes much of its perfection to the superstition of the past. The belief in astrology, however, was so universal, it formed so certain a portion of the creed of the age, that few of the astrologers could fairly be called impostors. Most of them believed what they taught, at least at the outset of their career.

Magnus, the astrologer, had been but a few years a resident

at the court of Parma. Whence he came, no one knew, but it was supposed from the East, the birth-place of science. Men said, indeed, that he possessed strange gifts, that he had discovered the elixir of life while pursuing his studies in Egypt, and that he bore a charmed existence, proof against disease and violence.

He had suddenly appeared one day before the gates of Parma, a tall, majestic-looking man, with a long silver beard, clad in the richest Oriental costume, and accompanied by a train of Nubians splendidly attired and armed. A file of pack-horses were laden with his goods. To the captain of the guard, whom he addressed in choice Italian, he presented a pass to the duke, authorizing the entrance of himself and train, and commanding that the utmost respect should be paid him. He was accordingly admitted within the city, and moved directly to the palace, where he had a long private interview with the duke. While this conference lasted, the courtiers and hangers-on of the palace endeavoured to obtain some information of the stranger's attendants respecting their master. But not one of the sable servitors proffered a word. They shook their heads on being addressed, and on being closely plied with questions, frowned savagely, and laid their hands upon their yataghans. At the conclusion of the interview between the duke and his mysterious visitor, orders came from the former to transport the effects of the stranger into the upper story of one of the wings of the palace. This done, the train which had escorted the guest into the city took its departure, moving forth in a glittering cavalcade, and from that day not one of them had returned. Nor was the astrologer, for such it was soon rumoured that he was, ever seen, save by the duke himself and two or three old and confidential servants, who went into the tower where he lodged, from time to time, to put it in order, and to carry thither fuel, of which he used large quantities, stores of food and wine, and other necessaries of life.

These men were, of course, at first closely questioned as to what they beheld in the mysterious apartments which they had the privilege of visiting; but they refused any answer, and the duke, finding how much they were annoyed, hinted that such interrogations would not be permitted. A hint was found quite sufficient, as no one cared to prove the indignation of the duke, and so the life of Magnus, the astrologer, remained an impenetrable mystery to the court. Men and women contented themselves with watching and surmises, and there was no end of the stories circulated with regard to the avocations and attributes of the stranger. The sentinels on duty in the night observed

that lights were never extinguished in the astrologer's tower. And these lights were of changeful hue. Sometimes, through the loopholes of his apartment, strange crimson rays shot forth like arrows on the night. At other times, ghastly blue and green flames rose from the chimneys, lighting up the surrounding turrets and tree-tops with a spectral glare. More than once a dull explosion had been heard. Of course the superstitious minds of the observers of these phenomena attributed to the stranger a commerce with the enemy of man, and many a credulous eye saw, in the midnight storm-cloud, the wing of the familiar demon, sweeping through the sky, to visit his mortal ally and associate. We have thus rapidly indicated the position and popular character of a personage about to be introduced to the reader, in connection with our narrative. We will now pass to the apartment of the duke on the evening of the day of the hunting party.

He had laid aside his hunting dress for a richer and easier garb, and was engaged in conversation with his equerry, all other attendants having been dismissed.

"Now, then, Ferrado," said the duke, "I have had no opportunity of questioning you before. You saw him?"

"Ay, my lord."

"And questioned him?"

"Carefully and closely. Machiavelli himself could not have conducted the examination more adroitly or plausibly, nor have found a franker or more unsuspicious subject to deal with."

"Well, go on."

"My lord, he is as harmless as a dove. He is void of ambition as a cloistered man. He is a philosopher."

"What did he say?"

"In the first place, I must ask your grace's pardon for the liberty I took in representing myself to Giulio as a discontented subject—as strongly attached to the old duke and his son."

"I believe my brother *was* an especial favourite with you," said the duke drily.

"With me, my lord!" said the courtier. "He scarcely knew me. I was a mere boy when he died, and was indebted to him for no favours, while to you I owe all."

"Leave out protestations of loyalty," replied the duke impatiently. "What said this Giulio Brigaldi?"

"He talked like a poet, a peasant, a philosopher. Babbled about his fields and nature, railed against the follies of the court, lauded your grace's administration, your bounty to himself, and proclaimed himself a perfectly contented man."

"A phœnix which philosophers and divines have never yet been able to discover!" said the duke sarcastically. "I congratulate you on your fortunate discovery."

"Your highness seems to doubt my tale."

"I doubt not, Ferrado, that you have reported the *words* of this young gentleman correctly. But the countenance often gives the tongue the lie. How looked he when he made this declaration?"

"His expression was that of perfect candour; I can conceive of nothing more guileless. I think you may trust his declaration implicitly, my lord," said the equerry.

"Ferrado," said the duke, rising, and laying his hand on the arm of the equerry, "I doubt, I doubt! He has deceived you; he cannot hoodwink me. But enough for the present. You must be weary; get you to your bed. *You* can sleep. Restlessness and vigil are my lot. But say—is there not in my troop of horseguards a man who was lately in the employ of Giulio?"

"Ay, my lord, Ramon Castro, a Catalan of Spain."

"It is well. Adieu, Ferrado! pleasant dreams to you."

The master of horse retired with a low obeisance.

"I must see this man myself," muttered the duke. "His image haunts me day and night, and portends danger. If the astrologer confirms my fears, my resolution is taken.

Lifting the hanging, and pressing the secret spring, the panel flew back, and the duke entered the secret passage and ascended to the astrologer's apartment.

The room he entered was a laboratory; a furnace, retorts, chemical apparatus, mingled with implements of unknown utility, crowded the room, which was pervaded by a pungent odour. The astrologer was seated at a table, with a parchment filled with cabalistic signs and figures, spread out before him.

He did not rise on the entrance of the duke, but contented himself with a salutation of the head. The duke seated himself near him, and addressed him rather with the manner of a client conferring with his advocate, than a ruler addressing his subject.

"Thou hast perused the stars lately, my friend?" asked the duke, with a tremulous voice.

"Every night I study them," replied the astrologer, "and every day I base my calculations on the observations."

"And what is their aspect?"

"They portend danger to thee."

"Danger!" exclaimed the duke.

"Ay, danger to thy throne. There is a star whose influence threatens to eclipse yours. I know not who he is—that my art cannot tell; but there is a mortal plotting against your security."

"And is the danger near or distant?"

"It is near at hand."

"Thanks for the warning; I shall know how to meet it. I have had a presentiment of this."

"There are ever, my lord, invisible spirits, the messengers of yonder bright luminaries, who whisper in our ears timely warning. Woe to those who turn a deaf ear to their suggestions!"

"I am not one of those," said the duke. "I am ever hearkening to their mysterious voice. Once more thanks, and good night."

The duke rose, and as he departed, laid a purse, filled with gold, upon the astrologer's table. The wise man gave no heed to the tribute—at least in the presence of the duke; but when the latter retired, he clutched it convulsively, poured out the contents on the table, counted them piece by piece, and then restoring them to the purse, locked it up in a huge iron chest that stood beside him.

"Gold! gold!—glorious gold!" he muttered. "I shall be rich—rich to the extent of my heart's desire!"

Meanwhile the duke descended to his cabinet, and blew a shrill note upon the silver whistle which he always wore, suspended to his girdle by a gold chain. In a moment an attendant stood before him, craving his commands.

"Send me the captain of my cavalier guard."

In a very few moments, for night and day he awaited the bidding of his master, a bronzed warrior, sheathed in steel, entered the apartment and saluted the duke.

"You can read, I believe, Gonelli!" said the duke.

"Like a clerk, my liege."

"Here are your orders, then," said the duke, giving him a paper he had been writing. "Take ten picked men, among them Ramon Castro, the Spaniard, and fail not, on your head, to execute the mission confided to you. By an hour after sunrise, to-morrow, I shall expect your return."

"My life shall answer for me," said the soldier.

Ten minutes afterward, the trampling of horse was heard in the court-yard, and the file detailed by the duke rode through the palace gateway at a sharp trot.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MIDNIGHT VISITOR.—A PRINCE'S INVITATION.

The night had commenced fair and cloudless, but in proportion as the hour advanced, a change had gradually been coming on the scene. Mists had risen from the valley, chilling the frame of the benighted travellers, and now portentous clouds were rising rapidly, pushing each other along, their black drapery almost sweeping the hills. Captain Gonelli rode in advance of his troop, looking neither to the right hand nor the left, his brows knit in the effort to penetrate the darkness, his bridle-hand steady and firm, feeling his horse's mouth, but not pulling on the heavy bit. From time to time he loosened his sword in its steel sheath, and striking back his rowels, he mended the pace of his powerful but somewhat sluggish charger.

Meanwhile the men conversed with each other in whispers. Fierce fellows, who passed their time between the guard-room and the saddle, who bartered hard blows for hard coin, would have charged through a legion in the broad daylight, they liked not this midnight excursion to which they had been summoned from the flagon and the dice-box.

"I would it were six hours later or earlier," muttered Pianori, a Corsican, through his thick moustache to his flank comrade. "Everything betokens a storm, and the lightning loves to play with a steel corslet, and often finds a crevice in a gorget that lance-point could never discover. And they do say," he added, "that the evil one rides abroad on such nights as this, with a train of spirits from the place of torment for attendants. Mortal foe I fear not; but I can't fight with phantoms i' the dark."

"Tush!" replied his comrade. "I am proof against the spirits of the air. I wear a blessed relic next my heart, which cost me a round score of ducats. I grudged the red gold when I was chaffering with the Capuchin about the bargain, for the golden sunshine was blazing through the guard-room windows, and I thought, had the huckster been other than a priest, and no lookers-on at hand, I would have paid him with steel from my dagger sheath rather than coin from my purse. But now the relic of the blessed saint I feel to be beyond all price."

"Look!" said the Corsican. "Do you see that pale blue flame on the lance-points of our file leaders? By all the saints!

my own spear-head is blazing! It is an evil omen." And the savage hireling crossed himself.

The phenomenon that alarmed him was a manifestation of the condition of the atmosphere, the steel lance-points of the riders having attracted the electricity of the low hung clouds; but in those days it was quite sufficient to excite the fears of the ignorant. Other soldiers perceived it, and murmurs arose.

"Silence in the ranks!" cried the stern voice of the leader, as he reined back his horse to allow the troop to close up. "What is the reason of these unseemly murmurs? Gottfried, what is it?"

The man he addressed was a veteran German, who, though sixty years of age, was as erect and active as any man in the command.

"Noble captain," said the veteran, saluting his officer, "if you will but look around you, you will see cause enough for the murmuring. The foul fiend and his imps are abroad to-night, I verily believe, and he hath affixed his signal-lights to every lance-point."

"And if he were here with a legion of his imps," replied the leader, raising his voice so that every one of the men heard him, "I should spit at and defy him Are we not soldiers of a Christian prince, and true children of the church, every cut-throat of us? The powers of darkness cannot prevail against us."

"But, noble captain," continued the veteran, "the signs of the heavens are portentous. We are on the eve of a fearful storm. Don't you hear the batteries of heaven opening overhead?"

"The sooner, then, we accomplish our orders the better. The prince hath sent us forth for a certain purpose, and it shall be accomplished, if the heavens rain fire, and the earth opens beneath my horse's feet. Forward, then, comrades; make good use of your rowels, and the sooner will you return to cup and trencher."

Stirring his horse with the steel, Gonelli dashed onward, followed by his troop at a sharp trot, and for a few minutes nothing interrupted the unnatural hush of the night but the clatter of hoof, the ringing of curb-chains, and the clash of scabbard and stirrup.

They had not ridden far, however, when the storm overtook them. It burst down with fearful fury; the wind, a perfect hurricane, roaring through the gorges of the hills, twisting branches from trees and strewing them in the road, while peal on peal of thunder shook the very earth. The lightning blazed from

every point of the compass—piercing, blinding flashes, cleaving the air at every moment, and terrifying the horses so that it required the utmost efforts of the riders to control them. The plumage was tost and torn on the crests of the cavaliers, and they were compelled to bend forward over their saddle-bows to resist the fury of the sweeping blast. The rain, at first pattering in huge drops, came down at last in a deluge, so that the whole country, sheeted with water, and blazing with lightning, looked like a sea of fire.

Captain Gonelli summoned the Spaniard, Ramon, to his side.

"Know you whereabouts we are now?" he asked.

"Ay, captain, I could find my way hither like a sleuth-hound in the dark, and there is light enough, by the mass! to discern the smallest object. We are almost at the turn now."

"And then?"

"I will lead you, if you like."

"Do so," replied Gonelli, "and beware of misleading me."

"Never fear," replied the Spaniard, riding to the front.

The troop followed in single file. The guide suddenly wheeled his horse, and, stooping to avoid the hanging branches of a sturdy oak, turned to the left into a bridle-path through a wood. The ground here was very slippery, and the riders necessarily slackened their pace as they advanced. They soon came to a torrent, commonly a mere thread of water, but now increased prodigiously in volume by the rain. Through this they boldly dashed, though the water rose to their saddle-girths, and then struggled up the opposite bank. After riding a few hundred yards further, the guide drew rein.

"Captain," he whispered, "we have reached the spot."

"'Tis well," answered Gonelli; and wheeling his horse, he gave the command to halt, in a low but perfectly audible tone. "You will keep the men here, Gottfried," he added, addressing the German veteran, "till I return. See that no man leaves his saddle."

He then moved forward with the Spaniard. They soon reached a building of some size, when the captain halted, and giving his bridle-rein to Ramon, dismounted, and approaching a low door studded with spikes, knocked loudly on it with his mailed hand. There was no reply for some minutes. He repeated the summons, and, after another delay, a wicket in the door was opened, and a voice inquired: "Who goes there?"

"A friend," was the reply. "A benighted traveller, overtaken by the storm."

"Wait, friend, till I undo the bolts, and then you shall find a welcome entrance," replied the voice.

In a short time the door was opened, and Gonelli sprung into the building, and closed it behind him. At the sight of an armed man, Tonio, the jester—for it was he who had opened the door—started back, nearly extinguishing the torch he held, and uttered an exclamation of surprise and terror.

"Not a whisper, knave," said the soldier, sternly, "or—" and he laid his hand menacingly on his dagger.

"Good signor soldier," said the jester, between his chattering teeth, "you would not harm a poor fool."

"Not if the poor fool acts the part of a wise man, and keeps his tongue within his teeth."

"There's many a wise man who cannot govern his tongue, and you expect a poor fool to do so. Marry, sir, methinks I should hail you as a brother."

"Silence, dog. Is your master within?"

"My master is within, most noble signor, but he is not visible on account of the darkness of the night. He is suffering an occultation—an eclipse."

"Lead me to him, sirrah," said the soldier, fiercely, grasping the jester by the collar. "I am weary of this bantering."

"If you mean him harm," said the jester, warning in turn, and shaking off the soldier's grasp, "you shall only reach him over my dead body."

"Bravely said!" exclaimed the soldier. "The spirit of a man-at-arms is in that fool's head of thine. I seek not to harm your master, that I tell you on the word of a soldier. Does that suit you?"

"Since there is no better pledge, I must e'en rest contented. And there is something in your looks that assures me you would not deceive. Then follow, most noble signor, and I will conduct you to the apartment of the lord of the villa, without the slightest fear that you will stab me in the back as I precede you. March on—folly first, valour afterward."

Treading close upon the heels of Tonio, the captain ascended to the second floor, and then, after passing through a long corridor, paused, with his conductor, before a door.

"Shall I disturb the sweet slumbers of my lord?" asked Tonio.

"Knock, sirrah, without more ado!" said Gonelli.

The jester knocked.

"Who goes there?" said a voice from within.

"It is I—Tonio, your friend and counsellor," replied the jester.

"Is it morning—is it time to rise?" asked Giulio, from within.

"It is not morning, but it is time to rise," replied Tonio.

"Here is a gallant gentleman to pay his service to your greatness."

"This is some foolery of thine, knave," replied Giulio, in an angry voice. "But if thou art playing me a trick at this unseasonable hour, thy back and the scourge shall be made acquainted."

"No need of an introduction, they are old friends," muttered Tonio, as he pushed open the door, and holding his torch on high, led the visitor to his master's bedside.

As soon as Giulio's eyes became accustomed to the light, he sprang from the bed and grasped for his sword, which usually lay beside him, but it was gone.

"Traitor!" he cried, grasping Tonio by the throat, "you have betrayed and disarmed me!"

"Don't harm the fool," said the captain. "Here is your weapon. The moment my eyes rested on it, I seized it. Not that it would avail anything against a coat of mail; but gentlemen roused suddenly out of their slumbers, are apt to do rash things when they first waken."

"Whence came you? Who are you? What is your purpose?" asked Giulio.

"From Parma—captain of the ducal guard—to conduct you to court," answered Gonelli.

"Where are your credentials?"

"Here," replied the captain, presenting a parchment scroll to Giulio.

The latter perused it thoughtfully. He appeared somewhat disturbed, but he answered:

"Retire for a moment. I will dress myself, inform my sister of this circumstance, and then be ready to depart."

"Pardon me," said the soldier, "I cannot permit you to communicate with any one."

"Not with my sister?"

"With no one whomsoever."

Giulio glanced at Tonio in a peculiar manner; the latter replied by a look of intelligence, and nodded. The keen eye of the soldier noted these signs. Without saying a word, he beckoned to the jester, and they left Giulio alone to perform his toilet.

"Now, my friend," said Gonelli, "isn't this a fine night, or rather morning—for time is verging on the latter—for a ride?"

"The storm is hardly over," said the jester. "But for them that like the saddle, all hours are propitious."

"Well, how should you like to accompany your master?"

"Well enough, for the matter of that," replied Tonio "And now I think of it, I'll go and saddle my mule."

"You shall do no such thing, my friend," said the captain, laying an iron grasp upon his shoulder.

The jester looked disconcerted.

"You are fond of my company," he muttered, ironically.

"So much so that I cannot spare you from my sight a single moment. And yet so jealous am I, that if you attempt to desert me, I'll cut your throat from ear to ear."

"I shouldn't like to have such an open countenance," said the jester, uneasily. "Is that the way you cut your acquaintances!"

"When they show an inclination to cut and run," replied the captain, grimly.

At this moment Giulio appeared. He was plainly attired, and had thrown his cloak over his shoulders. He wore a sheathed rapier at his belt. He looked pale and firm.

"Tonio, you will remain here until my return," said he.

"Answer him yes," whispered Gonelli, in the jester's ear.

"Certainly, certainly, signor," replied Tonio.

"Will you give me your word as a soldier," continued Giulio, addressing Gonelli, "that you have shown me all your instructions, and that, to the best of your knowledge, no harm is designed to me or mine?"

"Upon my honour," replied the captain, "I have dealt fairly with you, and know of no evil beyond this compulsory visit to the court."

"I am satisfied, signor; lead on."

They stood without the villa, when, at a signal from their leader, the troop advanced from the thicket where they had been posted.

"You give me a numerous guard of honour," said Giulio.

The captain made no reply. One of the troopers led up a horse, which Giulio mounted. He was then confided to the care of the lieutenant of the troop, who was ordered to march.

"Remember what I told you, Tonio," he said, as he rode away.

"Ay, signor, I shall not forget it."

When they had all ridden off except the captain, he turned to the jester and said: "And now, my man, we'll follow."

"Ay, noble captain—I will but go and get my mule."

"Nay, you shall be better mounted," said the soldier, laying on the jester's arm that same mailed hand, the weight of which he had before felt. "You shall have a seat behind me on my own good charger."

He changed his grasp to the jester's collar, and used it as an assistance in mounting his horse; then, swinging the man off his

feet with an exertion of his giant strength, he placed him on the saddle.

"Now take a firm hold of my belt," said he, "for my horse is a high stepper."

Striking the rowels into his charger's flanks, the captain followed the trail of his band, the rear of which they soon overtook. Tonio was very uneasy. Daylight was approaching, and he knew that, should the Lady Estella discover the doors of the villa open and her brother gone, she would suspect foul play, and be nearly distracted on the event. He was anxious to relate the affair exactly as it stood. He could conceive no better plan than slipping quickly off the horse, even at the risk of breaking his neck; but the captain must have divined his intentions, for, suddenly drawing his rein, he remarked:

"Tonio, I see you're a bad horseman, and if I don't have a care for you, you will catch a bad fall."

Thereupon this benevolent officer unbuckled his belt, and passing it round both Tonio and himself, buckled it firmly, taking care to secure the jester's arms beneath the cincture.

"Now you are safe," said he, pleasantly, "and you can enjoy your ride."

In this manner, the captain silent from habit and the jester from wrath and disappointment, they rode on some miles, keeping a little in the rear of the escort. At last, after a period of time which seemed an age to the poor jester, the cavalier halted his horse and unbuckled his belt, and suffered Tonio to slide to the ground.

"Now, my friend," said the captain, "you are at liberty to return to the villa, which I had forgotten your master told you not to leave. How thoughtless of me! And how sorry I am not to have a horse to offer you. It will take you two full hours to walk back. Farewell."

With this, the captain rode off sharply, leaving the jester standing in the middle of the road.

"The fiends seize you!" muttered the jester. "What a thorough knave that is. But he reckons without his host. Two hours to the villa! He little knows how fleet of foot I am. Now for it. If I die on the track, that iron-coated, iron-hearted villain will pay for it some day or other, if there is justice anywhere."

And girding up his loins, Tonio started back at a flight of speed which justified his boasting. In less than one hour he reached the villa, panting with his exertions, but sound in wind and limb.

It was high time. Morning had dawned, and the Signora Estella, who was the earliest riser at Monte Rosa, had already discovered the absence of her brother. Tonio encountered her on the threshold, and her first words were:

"Where is my brother? What has befallen him?"

"He has gone to Parma," gasped the jester.

"Alone?"

"No, signora. Carried off by a troop of the duke's horse. They took me half way, the villains, and then dropped me like a bad bargain, in the road."

"His life is in danger!" shrieked Estella.

"Not so bad as that," answered the jester, "but his liberty perhaps."

Estella wrung her hands and burst into tears.

"Alas! alas!" she cried, "this usurping duke is destined to be the ruin of our house! But I must dry my tears, and think and act!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE DUCAL COURT—A SURPRISE.

After Captain Gonelli had dismissed Tonio, he rode forward and joined Giulio Brigaldi, to whom he addressed a few words, but as they were answered with monosyllabic brevity, the conversation was not continued. Giulio rode on absorbed in his own thoughts. His position was somewhat anomalous. Captain Gonelli had been sent hither with instructions to *invite* him to court, but to bring him thither by force, if he were recusant. Inestimable courtesy! The aggravating circumstances of instant departure and non-intercourse with his household, might or might not have been a subordinate assumption of power, and yet Giulio strongly suspected the duke of verbally ordering every detail of his arrest and abduction. Once or twice, when he thought of his sister, he conceived the idea of escaping by a sudden dash; but the moment he glanced at his escort, he perceived the impossibility of executing any such project. The riders were formed in a deep, compact column, in the centre of which he was placed. On his left rode Gonelli, a man of giant strength, while his lieutenant, a perfect Hercules, flanked him on the other side. Bitter as these reflections were to him, his high spirit came to

his aid, and he resolved to brave whatever might befall him with a courage worthy of his blood.

It was broad day when Captain Gonelli answered the challenge of the sentinel at the gate he had selected for his entrance to the city, and rode within the walls. Clattering over the stones the troop trotted through the streets, approached the palace, and entered by a broad gateway the vast enclosure formed by the quadrangular pile. A few persons were sauntering about the courtyard. The first that Giulio recognized, expecting indeed to see no one he knew, was Ferrado. The latter rushed forward, aided him to alight, and shook hands with unfeigned cordiality.

"My dear cousin," said the master of horse, "you are the very last person I expected to see here! Has the duke rescinded his order of banishment, and have you tired so soon of solitude?"

"I am here by invitation of the duke," answered Giulio, bitterly. "He was so bent on my company that he would not take no for an answer—would not even give me time to make preparations for my journey—and you see what a splendid escort I had."

Gonelli beckoned Ferrado out of ear-shot, and they whispered together very earnestly for a few moments. At last Ferrado returned to his relation's side, the horses of the troopers were led off to their stables, and the officers repaired to their barracks.

"Do you mean to tell me, Ferrado, that you know nothing of my arrest?" asked Giulio.

"Nothing, upon my honour, nor can I conjecture what the duke's intentions are with regard to you. Gonelli has just given me verbal instructions to attend to your wants, and to present you to the duke."

"I am glad he has given me so gentlemanly a jailer at least."

"Don't persist in calling yourself a prisoner. The duke may intend to open a brilliant career to you, in atonement for his errors and neglect in the past. But, in the meantime, come to my apartments."

"Ferrado!" said the young man, "this Parma I revisit has changed from the city I remember—the city of my heart. The same palaces, the same villas, the same fountains, and the same gardens meet my eye—but the population of the streets is different. Not in my father's time were troops of male and female mendicants, in sordid rags, hollow-eyed, wan and sickly, seen moving through the streets."

"They are disgusting objects, the beggars," answered Ferrado, "they are eyesores—they must be removed from the public way."

"Better remove the poverty," answered Giulio, as they entered the palace.

The apartments of the equerry were sumptuously furnished. Gilded chairs covered with three-pile Genoa velvet, were arranged around the wall, on which hung huge Venetian mirrors and pictures, while silver branches holding wax candles were profusely introduced.

"What do you think of a prince who lodges his subjects in this style?" said Ferrado, pointing out this magnificence to the attention of his guest.

"I should rather see plain furniture in the palace, and fewer rags in the streets."

"Pooh! still harping on the beggars! The priests tell us that the poor are always with us."

"And so we must seek to increase poverty! Admirable logic!"

"I have no disposition to discuss political economy with you, Signor Philosopher, but had much rather discuss a good breakfast which is waiting for us in the next room. Will you honour my repast by sharing it?"

Giulio had half a mind not to break bread in the palace of the duke, but an instant's reflection taught him the absurdity of such a proceeding, and to say the truth, his ride had given him a keen appetite. He accordingly sat down with Ferrado in the next room, and did ample justice to his cheer. When the repast was over, Ferrado showed him his wardrobe.

"There," said he, "take your choice of these dresses; they are new and will fit you. How will you array yourself for presentation to the duke? Here's a suit of blue and silver. Or do you prefer one of purple velvet and gold? Suit your fancy."

"I thank you, Ferrado," answered Giulio, coldly. "When I have cleansed the travel-stains from my own dress, I shall be sufficiently presentable. I do not wish to appear in the borrowed plumage of a courtier."

"As you please," replied the equerry, a little piqued at the refusal.

Yet the manly beauty of Giulio's face and figure needed no adventitious aid from dress. His plain, dark suit well became his person, which was both elastic and muscular, and when he had completed the arrangements of his costume, even Ferrado could not help envying his appearance, notwithstanding the sim-

plicity of his apparel, though he himself blazed with purple velvet, embroidery, lace, gold, jewels and plumes.

At last an usher appeared to conduct Ferrado and his companion to the presence of the duke. They passed up a long marble staircase and reached a spacious ante-chamber, lined with the steel-clad halberdiers of the ducal guard. Thence they were ushered into a magnificent saloon, the frescoed ceiling of which was supported by a double row of Corinthian pillars of cream-coloured marble, while ladies and courtiers crowding the floor in dazzling array, gave it the appearance of a brilliant flower garden, and dazzled the eye of the spectator. On a marble platform raised above the level of the floor, on a carved and gilded throne overhung with a canopy of crimson velvet, richly embroidered with gold, sat the Duke of Parma in his splendid robes. But Giulio was unmoved by this display. He moved towards the throne with a firm and elastic step, and a serene countenance, and respectfully paid his obeisance to the sovereign. The duke arose, and descending to meet him, took his hand

"Nephew," said he, while the courtiers fell back to a respectful distance, so that the interview was in a measure private, "it is a long time since we have met."

"That was not entirely my fault, my liege," replied Giulio.

"It is needless to remind us of that," said the duke, a slight shade of colour mantling his usually pallid cheek. "I trust your ride from Monte Rosa did not fatigue you too much."

"I am a hunter and hardened by the exertions of the chase. But I was hurried hither somewhat rudely."

"What! did Gonelli dare affront a relation of mine? He shall pay dearly for it," said the duke with affected anger.

"Nay, my lord, he did but follow out the spirit of your orders, which he showed me."

The duke bit his lip.

"The change of scene must appear striking to you," he resumed, after a few minutes' silence. "Do you not think we are worthy to sustain the honours of our station? There is no ducal court that is said to surpass ours in magnificence."

"I should appreciate it better, my lord," replied Giulio, "had I not witnessed so much misery in the street. In my humble judgment, the true glory of a ruler lies in the comfort of his people."

"Giulio, you were born for a courtier," said the duke, ironically.

"I was born to utter free thoughts as they spring from my heart to my lips," replied the young man.

"You are not unlike your father—my poor, poor brother!" said the duke. "You have grown up his very image," he added, gazing keenly upon his nephew; "the very figure, air, voice and sentiments! They tell," he continued, after a pause, "that you are wedded to a rural life."

"They have informed you truly, my lord," replied Giulio. "Nothing can tempt me to abandon it. I have had, indeed, to be frank with you, ambitious dreams at times, but I am satisfied they were only idle illusions, and that my heart is at Monte Rosa."

"Nay," said the duke, in a tone of affected kindness, "you have no right to bury yourself in obscurity, your talents deserve another sphere."

"I am content," replied Giulio. "And the more so, since I have again witnessed with my own eyes, the hollow splendours of high station."

"Nephew," said the duke, "I wish to make friends with you. I propose to attach you to our person; to give you rank, splendid apparel, fortune! What say you to the offer?"

"That I respectfully decline it, my lord. It would not add to my happiness, nor is it in my power to do you service."

"I am not used," said the duke, in a tone of vexation, "to have my good offices rejected. But if you imagine you cannot serve me, you are mistaken. What say you to a commission in my guards?"

"The rank has no temptation for me. We live in a period of peace. It would vex my soul to command a guard of honour; day after day to go through the same dull routine, to marshal a band of idle men, to be the director of a mere court pageant. I could not endure it."

"Yet the profession of arms," said the duke "is usually tempting to a young man of spirit."

"Ay, when the war-trumpet wakes the land," replied Giulio, fire flashing from his eyes. "Were the state menaced, were my country in danger, then I would not wait for rank and emolument to win me to your service. If not otherwise, then, forgetful and disdainful of rank, I would enter the ranks as a volunteer, asking nothing but where I might meet the enemy."

At this moment, the crimson drapery behind them parted, and a beautiful woman, splendidly attired, her countenance flushed with warm colour, her eyes shaming the diamonds that blazed upon her person, advanced upon the platform. Giulio stood transfixed as the radiant vision burst upon his sight. He had recognised, with astonishment, the lady of the fairies' glen.

"Margarita—daughter—" said the duke, "this is Giulio, your cousin."

The lady, trembling and blushing, extended her hand. Giulio knelt, and with a hand that trembled also, raised hers to his lips, and imprinted thereon a respectful kiss of homage.

"We have met before," murmured the princess to her father.

"How? where?" cried the duke.

"At the hunting party in the forest. Our brave young kinsman saved my life."

The duke was surprised when he learned from the lips of his daughter the fact that it was her cousin who had rendered her such important assistance on the occasion of her accident on the day of the hunting party. Secretly he was displeased with the occurrence, but he could do no less than thank Giulio in warm terms, which contrasted, however, with the coldness of his tone and expression, for the service he had rendered. After thus expressing himself, he retired with the Princess Margarita, leaving the young man bewildered and yet pleasantly excited by the unexpected meeting. Ferrado came up to him, and affected to congratulate him warmly.

"Bravo, kinsman," said he, "your fortune is made. You have placed our duke under the deepest obligations. He cannot do too much to repay you. Either as courtier or soldier, a brilliant career lies before you. Why man!" he added, "how thoughtful and absent-minded you appear. What are you thinking of?"

"Of Monte Rosa," replied Giulio.

"You are perfectly incorrigible," said Ferrado.

At this moment a beautiful young page made his appearance, and approached Giulio.

"You will please to follow me," signor, said he.

"And pray, young sir, whom have I the honour of addressing?" asked Giulio.

"Hush!" whispered Ferrado. "He is Selim, the Princess Margarita's page."

"Lead on, sir," said Giulio, before the boy had time to reply to his question, and they retired together.

"He loves her!" thought Ferrado. "Loves the woman whom the duke hinted was not too high for my aspirations. Does she love him? He has saved her life. The princess is romantic. But the duke—what will he do? Will he seek to disarm Giulio's enmity by favouring the alliance? Yet the maid of Monte Rosa is fairer in my eyes, and that brief interview I had with her was fraught with fascination. I am tossed by conflicting passions—love, ambition—and know not which to choose. Time will decide."

In the meantime Giulio had followed the elastic step of his youthful guide, until the latter opened a door, and passing the threshold, he again stood in the presence of the lovely princess. If she had looked beautiful in the lonely forest green—if fairest of the fair in the brilliant circle of the court, her loveliness was still more dazzling now that she sat alone, in a sumptuous dress that enhanced her charms, in an apartment where the colours of the drapery were artfully contrived to give the fullest effect to her attractions. With an imposing gesture, she dismissed her attendant, and beckoned her cousin to approach.

"I little thought," she said, calmly, and as if acquitting herself of a duty, "that I should so soon meet you again, and to repeat my thanks for the inappreciable service that you rendered me."

"It was a service I would have rendered any one in your situation," replied Giulio; "a mere act of humanity; but for you, I would have braved a still greater peril."

The princess inclined her head to the compliment, but with little animation in her manner.

"I learn," she said, "that you visit Parma at my father's invitation."

Giulio could not help smiling.

"I indeed received a very pressing invitation from your father, lady," he replied. "He was so very anxious to see me, that he sent a troop of horse to bring me; and his messenger, the captain of his guard, made me rise from my bed to accompany him."

"But you were not harshly treated on your arrival?"

"Nay; presented at court, the duke offered to attach me to his person, to give me rank in his army."

"And you answered him—"

"That I preferred the peaceful shades of Monte Rosa."

"The life of a hermit, rather than the life of a man!" said the princess, sarcastically.

"The life of a philosopher, a painter, a poet, an agriculturist; is there baseness in the choice?"

"Yes; when a nobler career is open to you," replied the princess.

"How nobler?" said Giulio. "Is it nobler to flaunt in silk and velvet, with the idle minions of the court? Is it nobler to wear a useless sword, and grace an idle pageant as a carpet-knight?"

"But peace cannot always endure," said the princess.

"You have not studied the position of Parma," replied Giulio. "She is weaker than the surrounding states."

"Then why not seek a state which will give you an opportunity to win your spurs?"

"That opportunity has offered."

"And you have refuse it?" said the princess.

"I have refused it."

"Are you capable of a daring enterprise?"

"I know one happiness which I would give worlds to reach; a prize worthy the best efforts of my heart and hand," he said, meaningly, as he fixed his dark eyes on the princess.

"You will never attain any lofty aim," said the princess, hurriedly, as the colour mounted to her cheek, "unless you boldly venture. I counsel you to accept my father's offer. At least reflect on it; I am going this moment to see him, and shall perhaps return with him. Remain here—reflect on what I have said."

"She taunts me with baseness," said Giulio, as he paced the apartment. "Yet Heaven knows I do not deserve it I love her —and I feel that this passion, the birth of a moment, has become a part of my life. Yet to win her can I not accept rank and employment at her father's hand; the hand of a usurper So long as I deemed him a worthy ruler, I could acquiesce in his possession of the ducal coronet that is mine of right But now that my own eyes have witnessed his lavish prodigality, the misery that crowds the streets of my native city, the arbitrary character of this man, my soul rebels against longer inaction. The Duke of Milan, my father's friend and mine, has offered me his aid to regain my rights and depose the usurper. I will not harm a hair of his head, but I will reduce him to the rank from which he rose. He become my patron! He shall live to do me homage, to acknowledge his wrongs to his own blood, before the world."

At this moment a light step entered the apartment. It was the princess's page. He looked cautiously around him, then came close up to Giulio, and laying his hand upon his arm, uttered a single word in a low tone: "Danger!"

"Did the princess send you to me?"

The boy shook his head, and smiled disdainfully.

"I came of my own accord."

"Speak out then, and explain yourself."

"You are in danger, signor."

"I am always in danger at the court of Francisco Veroni."

"Do you prize liberty?"

"More dearly than life."

"Then fly!"

"That were the part of cowardice—and from an unknown danger."

"Hear me!" said the boy, hurriedly. "I have played the eavesdropper; and I know that the duke means to arrest you presently and cast you into a dungeon."

"Ha!" cried Giulio. "Is he capable of such treachery?"

"Stay not to reflect on my words, but fly!"

"I have no means of escape."

"Follow me, and quickly," said the page. "I will give you an Arab steed, fleet as the wind. I can guide you past the sentinels and the guards at the city gate. This way, stop not to consider."

The earnestness of the boy, the frankness of his manner and expression, banished all scruples from Giulio's mind. He motioned his youthful friend to lead the way. The boy directed him to the door by which Giulio had entered, and threw it open.

Two spearmen posted in the corridor, levelled their weapons at his breast. The page hastily closed the door, and was retracing his steps; accompanied by Giulio, when directly opposite them appeared Gonelli, with a file of dismounted troopers.

"I arrest you!" said the soldier.

"In whose name?" said Giulio, drawing his sword.

"In the name of the Duke of Parma!"

"I deny your authority."

"Disarm the rebel!" cried the duke, suddenly appearing.

"Rebel!" exclaimed Giulio, as the soldiers wrenched the weapon from his hand. "Thou art the rebel. The armed ruffians that do your bidding make not your right. My right is the blood that flows in my veins, and that you know full well, usurper."

"You shall utter your lofty apostrophes to stone walls," said the duke. "Away with him to the dungeon!"

"You have entrapped me like a coward!" cried Giulio. "Your minions surprised me in my bed. Yet this very morning you spoke me fair. Lately I saved your daughter's life—is this your gratitude?"

"I will hear no more!" said the duke, stamping furiously. "Remove the prisoner."

"Think not," said Giulio, "that this outrage can be perpetrated with impunity. Think not that I am friendless. Milan is near to Parma. And when this news reaches her brave duke, who, but for me, would long ago have thundered at your gates, he will summon his brave lances to the rescue, and they will flock hither to award stern justice."

"They may come too late for you," said the duke, with a sinister look.

"But not too late to avenge me," retorted Giulio.

"I cannot hear my noble master abused thus!" cried the page. "Gonelli, why do you not close the ruffian's mouth?"

"I thank you, boy," said the duke, with an applauding smile.

"I was aware," said Giulio, "that I had no friends in this accursed place. Lead me to prison, then," he added, addressing the captain, "a dungeon is preferable to the presence of this crowned villain."

At this moment the Princess Margarita appeared. The guard paused a moment to present arms, and Giulio took the opportunity to address her.

"To you, lady," he said, bowing with mock humility, "I am indebted for the fair lodging to which your father has consigned me. It was at your bidding I came hither. While I was listening to your fair words, your noble father was planning my arrest."

"Answer him not," said the duke peremptorily, addressing his daughter. "He is beneath your indignation. He will have time enough to reflect upon his threats and the charges he has uttered, in his cell."

Giulio folded his arms in proud disdain, and without uttering another word, followed Gonelli, while the armed troop closed around him. They passed into a corridor, and, after traversing a long gallery, came to an iron door, which was opened on a summons from the captain, admitting the party upon the landing-place of a long flight of stone steps. These they descended, and came to another iron door, which was opened by a stern, grey-haired man, dressed in a shirt of leather, and wearing a bunch of huge keys at his girdle.

"Matteo," said the captain, "behold your prisoner."

The jailer smiled grimly, and bowing with mock courtesy to Giulio, said:

"This way, noble signor, this way. I am only too proud to wait upon your lordship."

Giulio followed his new guide, while the soldiers returned to the palace.

"To a gentleman fond of retirement," said the jailer, with a sardonic smile, "this place offers a pleasant, agreeable retreat; easy of access, though not so easy of egress."

While he spoke, he put one of the keys in the lock of a low door, and the bolt shot back with a jarring sound. He then ushered his visitor into a small cell, dimly lighted, where there were a pallet, a stone bench, a water jug, and a table.

"You would find it much cooler," said the jailer, "if you wore irons on your wrists and ankles, but it seems the duke did not order these additions to your comfort."

"Leave me, ruffian!" cried the prisoner, stung to madness by the cold, taunting tone of the jailer. "At least you were not commissioned to affront me."

Chuckling at having roused the indignation of his victim, the jailer slowly withdrew, locking the heavy door behind him, while Giulio threw himself upon the bench, a prey to agonizing thought. Heavily rolled on the hours of the morning, and it seemed to the weary prisoner as if he had passed days in the dungeon, when he was roused from his gloomy reflections by hearing the key turning in the huge lock of his cell door. His eye had now become accustomed to the light, and as the door opened, he discerned the features of Selim, Margarita's page.

"Jailer!" shouted Giulio, fiercely, "do not let that young viper enter here I would be alone"

"Prisoners are choosers no more than beggars," replied the grim janitor, chuckling, as he withdrew, leaving the page and prisoner together.

Selim approached Giulio, and, to his surprise, fell upon his knees at his feet, burst into tears, and sobbed in deep distress.

"Did you come thither to perform a farce, boy?" said the prisoner, sternly. "Rise, and cease this foolery."

"Prince," said the page, "I will not rise till you forgive me for seeming to desert your cause in the princess's apartment just now. The look you gave me pierced me to the heart. Yet, sir, it gave me the acutest pain to side with your enemies; but it was done that I might have the power of serving you. The duke now reposes confidence in me, and sends me to you as a spy to win from you all your plans and hopes."

"How do I know that you are not one?" asked Giulio, though softening somewhat from his former severity of manner.

The page sprang to his feet, took the prince's hand, pressed it to his heart, and then covered it with kisses.

"I would pour out my life-blood for you," he said. "But tell me—if I succeed in procuring the means of evasion for you, will you permit me to accompany you in your flight?"

"I think not of escaping now," said the prince, "but I would give my hand for a trusty messenger to my friend and kinsman, the Duke of Milan."

"Hush!" said the page. "Speak low: prison walls have ears. Confide in me; I will be your messenger."

"Can I trust you?"

"As your other self."

"Boy! if you redeem your promise, you may rely upon my gratitude and friendship; your fortune will be made."

"I care not for fortune," said the page, "but only for your good opinion."

"Is the princess aware of your visit to me?"

A dark shade crossed the handsome face of the youth.

"She is your enemy," said he, "speak not of her."

"So fair, and yet so false!" exclaimed Giulio.

"Lose no time," said the page, impatiently. "The message!"

"Go to the duke; tell of my hard case, of the treachery and enmity of the usurper; leave the rest to him."

"Consider your message as delivered," said the boy. "I bear a charmed life, and will traverse the space between here and Milan like an arrow. Sleep in peace, noble prince; the tyrant shall be foiled."

He summoned the jailer and departed, taking care, before the grim functionary, to address an insulting remark to the prisoner, to lull any suspicions the jailer might have entertained. The visit of the page was a ray of sunshine in the dungeon's gloom.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MESSENGER—PLANS OF GUILT.

SELIM, the princess's page, was a youth of rare beauty—a beauty of a character that might have been charged with effeminacy, but for the redeeming fire of black eyes, bright and dazzling as a falcon's, and wild and daring in their expression. The rose and lily were blent in his complexion, and the curls that clustered on his head were of that intense blackness which has a glittering metallic brilliancy where it catches the light. He had come to court in the train of the astrologer, and a few words of recommendation from him secured his appointment as page to the duke's daughter. When she rode abroad, his horse was ever beside her bridle-rein; when she sat in her apartments, surrounded by her ladies, his place was on a cushion at her feet, either playing some plaintive air on his guitar, or reading to her from a favourite volume. Yet, for all this, he possessed a sufficiency of manly spirit. He brooked no insult—at the shadow of one, the colour would rush to his cheek, and his hand sought his

dagger hilt instantly. Then he rode with grace and fearlessness; no one but himself dared back Abdallah, the dapple Arabian appropriated to his use.

Such was the youth who now sought the ducal stables, and quietly directed a serving man to saddle his Arab. Springing on the back of the priceless animal, Selim then, by unfrequented streets, gained one of the city gates, and passing the guard unchallenged, rode moderately forth. It was only when he found himself beyond the reach of curious eyes, that he ventured to mend his pace.

"Now, Abdallah!" said he, addressing his horse, "show thy blood and breeding, for thy master has sore need of them. Hearest thou, Abdallah? One lieth in a dungeon yonder—beautiful, brave, unfortunate, the least hair of whose head is worth a thousand of thy race So now, Abdallah, stretch thy beautiful limbs, and fly with me like an arrow to the target. Away! Away!"

It really seemed as if the intelligent animal understood the language of his master. Snorting joyously, he stretched himself like a greyhound, and sprang at once into his swiftest gallop. His footfalls were as rapid as the pattering of raindrops in a summer shower Horse and rider moved in unison, and seemed animated by the same spirit. Up hill and down hill sped the matchless grey, never once faltering, each stroke of his gallop being as clearly executed and vigorous as when he started on his race.

At last Abdallah slackened in his speed—changed from a gallop to a canter, then dropped into a walk, and came to a full stand-still. It was not weariness, for he erected his head, and after listening intently for a moment, with his small, delicate ears pointing forward, uttered a loud, clarion neigh.

"What is it, Abdallah?" said the page.

The horse tossed his head playfully, and resumed his gallop with redoubled ardour. The page now entered a deep chestnut wood, where the road wound, broad and level, through the cool shadows.

All at once Selim heard a sound of horses' feet approaching, which the quick ear of his Arabian had detected long before, and presently there came sweeping towards him, round a turn in the road, a file of horsemen in bright armour, preceded by an officer of gallant bearing, who wore his beaver up, displaying a frank, handsome, and determined face. As soon as this person saw the page, he reined in his horse; and, obeying a command uttered in a low tone, his men came into line, and occupied the entire breadth of the road with a close front.

"Sir knight," said the page, "I am in great haste—on a message of life and death I pray thee stay me not, but give me passage."

"Not so, fair sir," replied the stranger, "till I know whence thou comest and whither thou art going."

"You are hardly courteous," said the page "And yet I care not to conceal that I come from Parma, and am hastening to Milan."

"To Milan!"

"Ay, signor, with a message to the duke.'

"You will not have far to ride, then," said the stranger, "and I myself will be your escort."

He whispered a few words to a subaltern officer, and the horsemen, breaking their line, resumed their march, leaving part of the broad road free.

The commander of this little party then wheeled his horse, and he and Selim galloped on together, leaving the soldiers to pursue their march. But few words were exchanged between the riders, until, reaching the brow of a hill, they emerged from the forest, and the road sloped down from the high table land they had been traversing, into a wide, open plain.

What was the astonishment of Selim to find it covered with a large army! In the centre of the plain was a group of tents, over one of which floated an emblazoned banner, while horses were picketed round it, and men-at-arms marching to and fro flung back the sunbeams from their glittering appointments. Dark masses of troops extended on the right and left.

"What is the meaning of this warlike array?" asked the page, in astonishment.

"That is a question which the duke alone can answer," said his companion, with a smile.

"O, lead me to him at once!" cried the page, impatiently.

"That I should have done without your asking," replied the officer, as they rode forward once more.

A few moments brought them to the front of a magnificent silken tent, the head-quarters of the army. Leaving Selim sitting on his horse, the guide dismounted and entered the tent. After a few moments, he re-appeared, and told Selim he might enter.

The boy complied with the invitation, and soon stood in the presence of the Duke of the Milanese He was a man in the prime of life, with a frank, handsome face, and sitting in a loose robe on a couch of velvet. The page saluted him, and waited for him to speak.

"What is your name, my lad?"

"Selim, my lord."

"You are a page, by your habit. In whose service are you?"

"In that of the most noble lady, Margarita, Princess of Parma."

"We have heard of that peerless lady," replied the duke; "any commands of hers will be respectfully received."

"But I come not from her, my lord," said the page.

"Not from the duke, I trust," said the sovereign of Milan, a frown darkening his handsome countenance.

"No, my lord—but from one of his victims—a prisoner in the ducal dungeons."

"Ha!" cried the duke, "his name?"

"Giulio Brigaldi is the name he bears," answered the page; "but his rightful name is Giulio Veroni."

"Boy!" cried the duke, vehemently, "if you have deceived me in this matter, a short shrift and a long halter shall be your reward. Is Giulio in the hands of the usurper?"

"He is, my lord."

"How came he in Parma?"

"He was arrested at midnight in his villa, and brought to the city. At first the duke plied him with fair words, but he was suddenly seized and thrown into a dungeon. The duke suspected not my sympathy, and hence I gained access to the noble prisoner. He bade me inform you of his position, and beg your aid in his sore distress."

"Swear," said the duke, holding up a crucifix before the page, "swear by this holy sign, that you have spoken the truth."

"I swear it," said the boy, reverently, and touching the cross with his lips.

"Then I have taken the field not a moment too soon," cried the duke. "The martial array you have witnessed was intended as a demonstration against Parma. I was on the march thither with a thousand lances at my back, and heavy artillery to boot, to demand the restoration of Giulio's heritage. And now he is yon villain's prisoner. Go back, boy—go back as fast as horse can carry you, and tell Giulio that ere many hours my trumpets shall be ringing at the gates of Parma. If the usurper dare to harm a hair of his head, he shall swing like a felon from the battlements of his own city. Go—yet stay; you have ridden on the spur hither, have you not?"

"Ay, my lord."

"Then your horse must be jaded. Leave him with us. You shall have the fleetest horse in camp."

The page smiled.

"Abdallah and I are too good friends to be parted," replied he. "And he is fresh and strong as though he had not galloped a mile. And for fleetness—he has not his match in Italy."

"Away, then, in Heaven's name!" said the duke, "and I will follow with my utmost speed"

The page bowed and retired from the tent. In a moment he was mounted and riding swiftly out of camp, accompanied by the same officer who had been his escort thither. His guide rode with him till they had passed the farthest videttes, and then bade him adieu.

Abdallah needed no urging. He flew rather than galloped over the surface of the ground, and soon the towers of Parma appeared close at hand. Selim halted in a little skirt of wood, beside a babbling stream, and dismounting, washed the foam and dust from his horse's flanks, and waited till he was cool and dry—the work of a few moments only, for the hardy steed of the desert had suffered little from the ride. This precaution taken, the page again mounted, and rode into the city as carelessly and calmly as if he had been just riding out for exercise.

About this time, the Duke of Parma was closeted with Magnus the astrologer, in the apartments of the latter.

"Your science, then," said the duke, in continuation of their train of remark, "has made you as familiar with those subtle poisons which destroy life, as with those wonderful elixirs which promote and prolong it?"

"Ay, my lord," replied the astrologer. "I understand the compounding of deadly substances, and have brought with me from the East, ingredients known only to those adepts who have derived their lore from the ancient sages and magicians. In Egypt I have seen a light finger-ring, with a secret hollow that contains a single drop of poison. That single drop of poison—tasteless, colourless, can instantly destroy life. The man who should swallow it would instantly fall a lifeless corpse, annihilated as by lightning. Medical skill would vainly search the frame to discover the cause of death, and would conclude it to be the effect of a sudden dispensation of Providence."

"It is wonderful," said the duke.

"There are other poisons," said the astrologer, calmly, "that do their work with equal certainty, though their operation is slow. I know of one, a few drops of which may be administered in any liquid without awakening suspicion by its flavour. He who drinks it is doomed. Thenceforth the world begins to fade before him. His cheek grows gradually pale, his eye loses its

lustre and its power, his frame is bowed, his hair is bleached, food does not nourish him nor wine sustain him, his bones become brittle as glass, and finally he sinks into the grave, though dead to all intents and purposes long before the breath has left his body. This poison is for the use of those to whom vengeance is a luxury, who love to gloat over the prolonged misery of their victims. The impatient heir asks for the quick poison—the epicure of vengeance for the slowly-working weapon."

"I would kill," said the duke, hoarsely. "But there must be no trace of my work. Can you aid me?"

"Will you reward me?" said the astrologer, in a low whisper.

"Ay—with an unsparing hand."

"But I must know the subject my art has to deal with."

"I will tell you all," replied the duke. "I will repose entire confidence in you. The man against whom you warned me is now within my grasp—lying in a cell of my prison-house."

"Giulio Veroni?"

"Giulio Veroni."

"The heir to the throne of Parma?"

"There is no safety for me while he lives. Yet I dare not put him to death—he has too many friends and allies. He must die a natural death. Do you understand me?"

"Perfectly."

"You are interested in this catastrophe as well as myself. While he lives, there is yet a chance of his recovering his rights. In case of his success, what becomes of you? Think you he would retain you at his court? Never—for he is one of those fools who, wise in their own science, laugh at the lore of the stars—who despise all secret feelings, and act their will in the broad face of day. He would drive you from Parma—nay, more, he would probably confiscate your wealth!"

"My wealth!" cried the astrologer. "I have none, I am poor. All your bounty is consumed in the costly pursuit of the occult sciences—in the search for the philosopher's stone; in the which, if I succeed, my noble patron will be wealthier than Solomon. I am poor—I am poor."

"Be it so. Then he will put an end to your pursuit of the occult sciences. Now you understand your position. Will you furnish me with the means of ridding myself of this enemy—speedily, at one stroke?"

"I am not by trade a poisoner," said the astrologer. "I must be largely bribed to do that at which my soul revolts. You must give me the means of bribing priests, of enriching altars, of purchasing salvation—and it is expensive in these hard times."

"You know me," said the duke. "My largesse shall exceed your wildest expectations."

"I will do it," said the astrologer, setting his teeth and drawing his breath hard.

"Enough. Have you the ingredients for compounding that swift poison that you spoke of?"

"I have—but it will take some time to compound it. It is a difficult and dangerous process."

"Set about it, then, at once." said the duke. "By nightfall it must be in my possession."

"You shall have it, noble duke. And my reward?"

"It shall be yours—fear not. Farewell."

He rose, as did the astrologer. The latter followed his patron to the outer door, cringing obsequiously till he was alone in his mystic chamber. Then he drew himself up to his full height, and paced the apartment with long strides.

"I shall be rich—I shall be rich!" he cried, in an exulting tone, tossing his arms aloft. "But not for myself do I covet the red gold and sparkling gems. Zelie—child of my heart—daughter of the loveliest of Circassia's children, she shall be the pride of the world in magnificence as well as beauty. She has served me faithfully, at once my slave and daughter; but she has won my entire heart. We will not live here. We will go to the far East; I will build a palace on the banks of the Ganges. Its minarets shall point to heaven and their golden crescents shall be studded with diamonds. I know where the river sand is full of gold; valleys where the diamonds are sown thick. We will have horsemen, and slaves, and camels and troops of elephants. My daughter shall be mated with an eastern prince—and for me, I shall discover—I have approached the threshold of discovery—the elixir of life, and I and mine shall enjoy perpetual youth. This it is to have a fool for a patron. The poison! I told him not that it is already prepared, ready to do its office on any enemy of mine."

Lifting a small jar from a shelter, he carefully took therefrom a few drops of colourless liquid which he put in a small phial standing on a table, and then replaced the larger vessel. As he turned away after the completion of his task, a clear, musical voice, yet thrilling withal, uttered, "Thou shalt do no murder!"

The astrologer turned as it fell upon his ear. His expression, at first dismayed and confused, changed to one of the sunniest delight; his eyes moistened, his lips, his whole frame, trembled, and he stretched forth his arms in the direction of the voice, as

gliding from behind a mass of drapery that concealed her, a woman of dazzling beauty, in all the glory of youth, stood before him. Zelie stood before the astrologer, he sought to clasp her to his heart. But she avoided his embrace with a shudder.

"Wouldst thou sell thy very soul for gold?" said the maiden, with indignant emphasis.

"Nay, nay—Zelie; what are these Christians other than dogs, that we should shrink from ridding ourselves of them without compunction? It is but an animal less in the world—but to me one stride nearer the end."

"And that end?"

"Thy happiness, my daughter—thy joy, my delight—thy greatness, light of my eyes—star of my existence—thou, memory of the past, hope of the future."

"Father," said the beautiful girl, drawing nearer to the astrologer, and no longer shunning his embrace, "I know that you love me, idolize me, all unworthy as I am."

"And I will make you happy, Zelie. You shall mate with a prince."

"I love a prince."

"You!" exclaimed the astrologer, in astonishment.

"Ay, father. A noble I have seen at this court."

"It cannot be the Duke of Parma!"

"It should be the Duke of Parma."

"Francisco Veroni?"

"No! Giulio Veroni—the rightful heir to the throne."

"It cannot be!" said the astrologer, trembling with excitement. "You have not dared to fix your affections on that man."

"Have you not often told me, father, that we cannot fix our affections—that they are decided by fate? Have you not told me that two souls destined for each other, coalesce the moment they approach each other?"

"But this Giulio has but to-day arrived at court. Scarce arrived, he was arrested and thrown into a dungeon."

"He has been here long enough. To see him was to love him. My page's disguise, which I assumed, you know how reluctantly, to favour your enterprise, to obtain you information and enable you to play your part successfully, allowed me to see him as I might not have done had I worn the garb of my sex. I know the nobility of his soul equals the perfection of his form and face. I sought him in his dungeon, and became his messenger; I would have undertaken for his sake to go to the end of the world. I carried a message for him to the Duke of Milan."

"Zelie! Zelie!" cried the astrologer, wringing his hands, "you have ruined me. But go on—did you see the duke?"

"I saw him. He is approaching Parma in arms at the head of a powerful force."

"Instantly will I apprise my master. Mad girl! you know not what you have done. Our fortunes—perhaps our lives hang on the breath of the reigning duke. If he falls, we are driven hence—branded as impostors, enemies of the state—stripped of our treasure—turned adrift upon the world without a ducat."

"Nay, father; I hope more from the kindness of Giulio than from the caprice of Duke Francisco."

"You know nothing of him; you are bewitched—enchanted; you are blighted by the evil spirit. O, Zelie! it was a fatal hour when you saw this youth."

"Father!" cried the girl, passionately, "hear me—I love him; you have consented to give the duke the means of destroying his life, and too well I know your fatal skill. Now hear me! If you have laboured for me, I have in turn laboured for you. We are partners in imposture. To please you, I have laid aside the garments of my sex—crushed the sensitive feelings of a woman's nature—been the slave of a woman's caprice—the companion of men with whom I could not sympathise. I demand some requital. I can love but once—I have fixed my affections on this man whose life you seek—a man who has never wronged you. Spare him for my sake, and my blessing and the forgiveness of Heaven shall rest upon your head."

"Were you in your senses, I might listen to you, Zelie," said the astrologer, "but you are mad. This sudden fancy for the stranger is stark insanity. When he is no more, you will look back on this passion as a fevered dream."

"Never, father; my mind is unshaken even in the midst of my distress. Spare the life of this young prince!"

"My word is pledged to the duke," replied the astrologer.

"Revoke it."

"It cannot be."

"Then behold the alternative!" exclaimed Zelie. Springing to the table, where the astrologer had placed it, she seized the phial containing the deadly poison and uncorked it.

"Hold, Zelie!" cried he astrologer. "Pause! a single drop of that deadly venom will lay you a quivering corse at my feet."

"I know it," said the girl, approaching it to her lips. "I have no wish to live."

"Zelie! Zelie!" cried the agonized father, "I will do all you

promise. Come ruin, come want—anything, but harm to you. I will break with the duke."

"You swear it?"

"I swear it by the prophet of our faith!" said the astrologer, solemnly.

"It is well," said the girl calmly, as she closed the phial.

"Give me that fatal draught," said the astrologer.

"Nay, father," said the girl; "you have furnished me a weapon that I will never part with. Not against yourself, but in the chances of life, should the storm clouds gather too darkly overhead, should shame and disappointment ever render life a burthen, then this precious draught would give me peace and quiet." As she ended, she hid the phial in her bosom.

"You have the soul of the bravest man in the loveliest form of a woman," said the astrologer, half-admiring, half-shuddering at her energy. "Now you have my word. But how am I to deal with the duke?"

"Listen to me, dear father," said Zelie. "You have often told me that your art enables you to compound a potion, the effect of which, seemingly, is to destroy life utterly, but which, in reality, simply suspended animation for many hours, without injuring the patient."

"I do indeed possess that secret," replied the astrologer. "It is one of the simplest of my craft. Nay more—I have some of that potion already prepared."

"Well then, give it to the duke, instead of the fatal mixture that you promised him. You pledge me your word that it will not injure Giulio."

"I should not fear to administer it to your own dear self."

"I trust you then. Give this to the duke. Let him administer it to the prisoner, and then we will watch the course of events."

"I fear—I fear the issue," said the astrologer, doubtfully.

"Fear nothing. You look already brighter—already more like your truer and nobler self, now that your soul is relieved from the weight of guilt you were ready to assume. And O, father, if you value my love, believe me that I love you now more dearly than ever!"

"Zelie," said the astrologer, kissing the fair forehead of his daughter, "you can do with me what you like. Your love is the gleam of pure sunshine that traverses my wild and dull existence. So that you are near me and happy, I care not what befalls. These stolen visits give a perception of the bliss of the blessed."

"Adieu, father. We shall meet again soon. I must put off

these garments, and appear once more in those I hate. It is only in disguise that I can now serve the man I love."

Lightly she glided behind the drapery that hung on one side of the apartment, and vanished through some secret egress.

"It is destiny that shapes our ends," said the astrologer, as he busied himself with the preparation he was to deliver to the duke, in place of the deadly composition he had promised. "What is to be will be. It is useless to strive against the decrees of fate. This sudden passion has even mastered the girl. But it may pass like a delusion—a dream. Not even gratitude will induce this prince to marry Zelie, though she be a mate for a monarch. Yet if he prove insensible—if he break her heart, her father will know how to avenge her."

Again the duke sought the presence of the astrologer.

"I came," he suddenly said, "to urge your utmost diligence in the matter we agreed upon. I shall have occasion speedily to use the preparation. How soon can you place it in my hands?"

"It is ready, my liege," said the astrologer, handing a small phial to his patron.

"Thanks, thanks!" cried the duke joyously.

"When murder is to be done, the stroke should be speedy," said the astrologer.

"And when work is performed, the recompense should be swift," answered the duke. "Look at these, they are some diamonds I purchased in an extravagant moment of an Eastern merchant. See if they are worth your acceptance," and he placed a small casket in the hands of the astrologer.

The latter was a man accustomed to veil his emotions; yet, when he opened the case and the blaze of the gems shone forth, he could not conceal his satisfaction.

"They are magnificent," he said. "It is a gift worthy of a monarch."

"If the product of your skill fulfil your promises, the reward shall be doubled," said the duke.

The astrologer bowed low, and poured forth his acknowledgments, following the duke to the door, and taking leave of him with the utmost obsequiousness.

"Wonderful art!" said the duke, as he regained his cabinet. "A death in every drop of liquid. How much better than the steel and axe!"

He concealed the phial, and summoned Montaldo, his equerry.

"Ferrado," said he, "the evil days are upon us."

"I trust not, my liege."

"I will not disguise it. Evils menace the state. Giulio is in my power."

"That danger is conjured then."

"Not so; he has friends. If the news of his arrest and imprisonment take air, they will be swarming about my ears."

"Let them come; we will fight."

"Ferrado, I am no longer young," said the duke. "A suit of armour would chafe my limbs. These latter years of luxury have weakened my courage. I must have a strong arm to lean on."

"Your grace knows that my arm and life are at your disposal."

"I think so," said the duke. "Ferrado, you must be nearer yet to me. I give you the command of my troop—absolute over them; you will only be subjected to my pleasure."

"I accept the post with gratitude," replied Ferrado.

"That is not all. I must bind you in yet closer bonds."

"The gratitude I owe to you is a sufficient pledge of my good conduct," said the equerry.

"Nay," said the duke, "hear me out. My daughter, Margarita, is reported lovely."

"None lovelier in all Parma."

"When she is your bride, Ferrado, you will be as dear to me as herself."

"The princess my bride!" exclaimed Ferrado. "Am I dreaming?"

"You have my full permission to address her."

"My liege, my liege!" cried Ferrado, "you will drive me wild! Never dared I raise my eyes so high as you have bid me look."

"Go, good Ferrado," said the duke, pressing his hand, "marshall our men, and see what effective force we can rely on in case the enemy should suddenly assail us."

"Ferrado, after a warm expression of thanks, retired from the presence of the duke. Had he really forgotten Estella?

An usher presented himself, and announced that the vassal of a lady of rank craved an audience with his highness.

"Admit him, said the duke

CHAPTER IX

THE MISFORTUNES OF TONIO AND HIS MISTRESS.

The duke's usher, after receiving his orders, withdrew, and immediately afterwards introduced our acquaintance of the villa of

Monte Rosa, Tonio, the jester. This marvellous individual was attired in a new parti-coloured suit which he had been reserving for a great occasion. The orange-tawney and scarlet of his garment was absolutely dazzling, in his opinion at least; and he had, moreover, to increase the effect of his presence, bedizened himself with a multitude of ribbons of various hues, which flaunted and fluttered about him as he moved. Such was the extraordinary personage who, not one whit abashed by the rank of the duke, now went through a series of the most grotesque salutations.

"Cease those unmeaning gyrations, fellow," said the duke, angrily. "I need not ask, for I perceive thou art a fool."

"Any fool can see that with half an eye," replied the jester. "You have hit my calling exactly, most serene and transparent highness. I am witty and wise enough to play the fool; it is my profession. But there are so many amateur fools in the world, they are spoiling the business."

"Will you tell me your name?" said the duke, impatiently.

"That will I incontinently, most high-minded, illustrious, andnever-to-be-addressed-without-the-utmost-respect potentate."

"What is it, then?"

"Tonio, for default of a better."

"And whose livery do you wear?"

"The livery of folly; hence I am everybody's knave, your Serene Transparency. But most particularly and especially am I affected to the service of a very high, very mighty, very noble, worthy, accomplished, beneficent, refined and amiable prince, who dwelleth on the elevated summit of the hill, monticule or mountain, called by the vulgar, Monte Rosa."

"Giulio Brigaldi!"

"Your immaculate and effulgent excellency has named him."

"And what brought you hither?"

"Marry, your magnanimous highness, these same well-knit and elegantly modelled legs of mine, after which those of the Apollo would have been moulded had I lived a couple of thousand years ago. Not that I am compelled always to go on foot, tremendous sovereign; for in this world folly rides and wisdom walks. But on this occasion, my mule was affected to the use of a lady—and she was a noble beast; I mean the mule, craving your excellency's pardon."

"And pray, sirrah, what is the object of your visit?"

"If I were to tell you it was to see the glories of your illustrious court, I should be telling a falsehood, like your courtiers, my luxurious liege, and should deserve a flogging as they do.

We, that is the lady and myself, come hither to crave a boon of your high and mighty excellency; a boon that involves the happiness of two worthy friends of mine—the lady I have been speaking of, and her brother, the excellent Signor Giulio."

"He is well cared for," said the duke.

"Your serene highness's information is exceedingly acceptable," said the jester.

"And you shall be lodged as he is," said the duke.

"Your highness is exceedingly polite," said the jester.

"What, ho! there! Who waits?" called the duke.

The usher who had introduced the jester, entered. The duke whispered a few words in his ear, the man bowed, retired, and presently a tall, stout fellow of sinister aspect entered.

"Take this fellow to the place you wot of," said the duke.

"This way," said the man, laying hold of the jester, and pointing to a door opposite to that by which he had entered.

"No, *this* way, my unknown friend, said the jester. "Here's a lady without."

"Away with him!" said the duke.

"But your highness—" pleaded the jester.

"Remove the villain from my sight!" cried the duke, waving his hand.

So, in spite of struggles, and of outcries that made the vaulted chamber ring, the unfortunate jester was borne away.

During the interview between the duke and the jester, Ferrado Montaldo, in retiring from the audience-room, unexpectedly encountered Estella. He could not but feel flattered by the warm glow of pleasure that lighted up her face as she recognised him. She advanced to meet him as if he had been an old friend; for she lacked the experience which would have taught her to suppress her frank emotions.

"You here, signor!" she exclaimed. "I am glad to find one face I can recognise among all the stranger countenances."

While she was speaking, Ferrado was mentally comparing her attractions with those of the princess, and his heart could not help acknowledging that they far outshone those of the titled lady.

"I care not to ask by what chance we have again met, lady," said the equerry. "Whatever it is, it is a blessed one."

"My errand is a sad one," said Estella. "I came to seek my brother, hurried away from me, by a troop of the duke's men, in the middle of the night."

"I had the pleasure of meeting him here," said the equerry, evasively.

"Why was he brought hither, sir? You can tell me all about him—you belong to the court."

"I am Ferrado Montaldo, late master of the horse, now raised to the command of the troops by the generosity of my prince."

"Then you are in favour with him, sir," exclaimed Estella. "And you will place his sister in a way to aid him."

"I cannot think your brother is in danger, signora."

"In danger, Signor Montaldo! No! What has he done to endanger him? But he may be deprived of his liberty. Perhaps, however, you can procure me an interview with him."

"For that privilege, lady, you must apply to the duke," replied Ferrado.

"But you will be my friend, will you not?" asked Estella, persuasively. "You will not desert the cause of two innocent persons, Signor Montaldo?"

"You may rely upon my services when they can be effectively rendered," said Ferrado. And he meant what he said. The impression the beauty and gentleness of Estella had produced upon him at first sight was deepened by the second interview.

"Will you not go before the duke with me now?"

"I regret to say that I cannot. He has just assigned me a duty to perform. As soon as that task is despatched, I will hasten back to the palace to receive your commands. But you need no friend with the duke. Your own beauty and eloquence will be the best advocates of your cause. Adieu, lady—you can reply upon my sympathy and aid."

Estella felt animated and encouraged by this brief interview. She had secured one friend—and a powerful one—at the court of Parma. While she awaited with some anxiety a summons to the presence of the duke, she was startled by the shouts and outcries of Tonio, as he was borne away. Alarmed beyond expression at this occurrence, and unwilling to desert her servant in his hour of need, she suddenly made her way into the presence of the duke, and, to her astonishment, found him alone. The drapery which masked the door by which the jester had been carried away had dropped and hung as motionless as if it had never been disturbed. The duke rose and saluted his visitor.

"If I mistake not," said he, "you are so near to me in blood that I should recognize you at the first glance as my brother's child."

"You see before you, my lord," said the maiden, simply, "Estella, Giulio's sister."

"And is it to see Giulio or myself that you have visited Parma?" asked the duke, with a bland smile.

"Both, your grace," replied Estella, falteringly. "I am aware that it is only through you that I can see my brother."

"Why this anxiety about your brother, maiden? I had an urgent desire to see him—I sent an escort for him, and he is here."

"Where, my lord?" inquired Estella, fixing her bright eyes on the sovereign.

"Where he has no longer the power to harm me," replied the duke, sternly.

"Duke of Parma!" said Estella, shaking off her embarrassment at once, and assuming a tone of command, "I demand an explicit answer to my question. "What have you done with my brother?"

"He is within a dungeon," said the duke.

"Ah! You have not dared to do it!" cried Estella.

"Dared!" retorted the duke. "You forget, girl, whom you are addressing. Am I not Duke of Parma?"

"By what title?"

"By the title of my iron will—a will that has hitherto broken every obstacle that crossed its path."

"What has my brother done," exclaimed Estella, "that you should treat him in this manner—so unnaturally? He lived quietly at Monte Rosa."

"Ay—but he lived!" retorted the duke.

"I understand you," said Estella; and though the blood curdled at her heart, she maintained a bold front, and continued to speak with an unfaltering voice. "So long as Giulio was at liberty, your throne seemed insecure. I know but little, it is true, of public affairs, but yet my common sense tells me you made a mistake. Giulio at liberty is less dangerous than Giulio in prison."

"Indeed!" said the duke, sarcastically, raising his eyebrows as he emphasized the exclamation.

"Yes, my lord, a great mistake," continued Estella. "We have friends, my lord, humble as we seem. So long as Giulio was permitted to remain on his estate undisturbed—and I did my best to make him love retirement—those friends remained quiescent. You have deprived him of the dearest blessing of life—liberty, and have thus absolved them from the implied obligation to keep the peace."

"You talk like a politician," said the duke. "These ideas cannot have come to you intuitively. No, no, I see it all. Your brother has canvassed you with all the chances of success—estimated his strength, and prepared for rebellion."

"You wrong him—foully wrong him," cried Estella, warmly. "I have often heard him deny the right of an individual to risk the misery of a people in the convulsion of a civil war, even to regain a throne of which he was wrongfully dispossessed. The peace of Parma was dearer to Giulio than his personal aggrandizement."

"I believe it not," said the duke. 'I believe he was secretly concluding measures with the duke of Milan to strike for the ducal coronet of Parma."

"You have been grossly deceived—or your fears have deceived you," said Estella. "No such thought ever entered Giulio's soul."

"He never allowed you to fathom its dark depths, then," replied the duke. "I am convinced that he was in league with the Duke of Milan."

"O, beware of Milan, my lord!" said Estella. "Her duke is the soul of chivalry—his lances are the best in Italy. When he marches against Parma, the knell of your power is tolled."

"I laugh to scorn the prophecy, girl," was the duke's reply. "I feared but one man, and that man is in my power."

"Set him free and you are safe," said Estella.

"I accept no counsel from your lips," said the duke.

"Duke of Parma!" cried the maiden, "I came hither to implore my brother's liberation. I now no longer ask it for my sake—I warn you to set him free for yours."

"Were an angel to plead for him, I would spurn the suppliant."

"Then hear me," said Estella "Christendom shall know from these lips that you are a false and traitorous sovereign I will go from court to court and proclaim that Francisco of Parma is a false knight, unworthy of the spurs he wears. I will set up my banner, and summon all true knights to rally round it. These towers may be stormed, for mighty as they seem, while there is justice in Heaven, and valour on earth, there is hope for us. My tongue shall become a trumpet to proclaim thy shame and my brother's wrongs."

"Verily you are transformed, maiden!" cried the duke, in a tone of affected admiration. "Minerva—Bellona—what shall I call you?"

"You know not, proud duke, what a woman—a young maiden—may achieve, when stung by a sense of intolerable injury."

"Nay, fair one, I know full well the power of a woman's pleading. I grant that your enmity would prove most formidable. I frankly confess that you might, in a few days, by the influence

of your beauty and your admirable eloquence, arouse a mighty host against me. But there is one condition to your success that you have doubtless overlooked."

"Name it!"

"Your liberty."

"I do not understand you."

"When an individual becomes dangerous to the state," pursued the duke, "sex is no longer regarded. Though we may deem the limbs of a woman too delicate to wear chains, yet we may restrain her fury within solid walls."

"You cannot mean—"

"I mean simply—that, as your relative, and, consequently, your natural guardian, in the incompetency of your brother—to hold you a prisoner"

"Ah!" cried Estella, perceiving at a glance the position in which she was placed "Why did I come hither unarmed!"

The duke clapped his hands thrice. Three or four attendants answered the summons.

"Convey this lady to my daughter's apartments," said he. "Place a guard without, and see that she leaves them not, on peril of your lives Now, maiden," he added, "I think your eloquence will do me little harm."

"False duke!" retorted Estella, "we shall yet be avenged."

With these words on her lips, she was hurried away.

CHAPTER X.

SUNSHINE IN THE PRISON.

Giulio, sitting in his lonely cell, a prey to those anxieties and irritations which beset the bravest hearts in the first hours of imprisonment, was roused from his pleasant reveries as the shades of evening began to darken, by the heavy footsteps of the jailer. which he had already learned to distinguish from that of his fellows. But he could not hear, for it was light as a snow-flake, the footstep of a companion. The heavy iron door was cautiously swung back, the burly figure of the jailer darkened the threshold as it passed it, and the sudden radiance from the lamp he carried in his hand, at first prevented the prisoner from seeing that the man was not alone. As his custodian withdrew, after placing the lamp in a socket, attached to one of the stone pillars,

Giulio became aware of a tall and slender figure, shrouded in a mantle, that remained behind. Deeming this personage a companion in misfortune, he advanced and said:

"Stranger, I know not your name, but I welcome you to a gloomy lot."

"I am no stranger," said a silvery voice, in reply, and as the veil parted and the mantle fell, Giulio recognized the Princess Margarita.

He bowed coldly.

"Signora," said he, "methinks you might have spared yourself the trouble of coming to witness the triumph of your father's tyranny and of your contrivance."

"My contrivance! Giulio—prince!" said the duke's daughter, tears succeeding to the passing glow of indignation which had at first tinged her cheeks.

"Are you not my enemy?" asked Giulio, sternly.

"Your enemy?" She could say no more—her heart was too full.

"Was I not arrested in your own apartment, whither you had invited me?"

"True—but I knew not my father's intentions toward you. I was thunderstruck when you were seized—the atrocity of the act paralyzed my powers, and believe me, I experienced the deepest shame, the greatest distress, at this violation of the rites of hospitality and the claims of blood. Were not such my feelings, believe me, prince, I should not be here alone, at this hour. What—who could have induced you to form so unfavourable an opinion of me—to think me so mean, so guilty a wretch!"

Giulio was on the point of replying, "your own page," but he closed his lips ere the words found utterance. Though thoroughly convinced by the manner no less than by the words of the princess, that she had been grossly slandered, he could not in honour surrender the page—guilty of libel though he were—to her legitimate indignation. The boy had undertaken to perform a dangerous and fatiguing service, and that obligation should cancel his other fault, however great.

"Lady," said the prisoner, "I have sinned against you in my thoughts, prompted by appearances which, to the excited mind of a man in my situation, seemed convincing proof. But I blush to have entertained them, even for a moment—to have thought you for a moment other than the angel you are."

"I have ventured hither," said the princess, in a low tone, "using the authority my rank gives me, and abusing the confidence my father reposes in me, in obedience to an uncontrollable

impulse, which bade me see you—beg you be of good cheer, and tell you that in the very heart of your enemy's stronghold, you had one powerful friend, devoted to your cause."

"Then I have friends within and without the garrison!" cried Giulio.

"I have other news for you," said the princess. "Your sister is at Parma"

"My sister here!"

"She came hither to seek you, and demand your liberation of the duke."

"Alas! why did she place herself in his power? Why did she not remain at Monte Rosa?"

"She is imprisoned here."

"Estella imprisoned! Her delicate form stretched on the cold floor of a cell!"

"Nay—hear me!" said the princess, with a smile. "The duke is not so hard-hearted as to treat a woman with that severity. She has a gentler jailer than yourself. She is entrusted to my charge, and secluded within my apartments."

"I have nothing to fear, then, so long as she is with you. But tell me, signora—my sister came not to Parma alone?"

"No; your faithful servant, the jester, came with her."

"Faithful fellow! We are all then in the power of the enemy."

"I am sorry to tell you that the jester is imprisoned. I could not procure his immediate liberation. But I have ordered Matteo to place him in your cell."

"Thanks—thanks—you are indeed an angel of mercy, and your presence to-night is like a gleam of sunshine in the dark chambers of my heart. Beautiful princess, it was a providence by which we met; you are now my Providence, as you come on your errand of mercy. I lift my eyes to you as a superior being; and yet, in spite of your dazzling attributes, I dare to love you, and confess it."

The princess trembled with emotion. Giulio took her hand and kneeled at her feet.

"O, say not that you deride my suit and are offended at my daring. I cannot control my emotions, I cannot conceal my wishes. There is a wide, wide gulf between yourself and me; but it may be overleaped. Fortune may smile upon me."

"Your fortune would be my father's ruin," said the princess.

"For your dear sake, I would not harm a hair of his head. In any event his life shall be sacred. But—you are offended."

The princess had concealed her face, but her tears fell upon the hand that grasped hers. Those tears were a revelation.

"Dearest Margarita, you do not hate me; those are not tears of grief and anger."

A gentle pressure of the hand was the reply.

"It is not walls of stone that make a prison!" cried Giulio, joyously, as he clasped the princess in his arms, and dared to imprint a first kiss on her lips. "You have made this cell an Eden; you have given me more than life—you have given me a motive for living."

The princess gently extricated herself from his embrace

"Giulio," she said, "I have remained here too long. My place is elsewhere. I must be active in your behalf."

"Go then, dearest, since it must be so," said Giulio, "and tell my sister that I am happy. Tell her all; tell her that we love each other. And for my part, whatever may be my fate, this moment of bliss will atone for every pang that tyranny can inflict on me. Good night, sweetest, I must not detain you, though every moment of your presence is a priceless joy."

And so, with one more embrace the lovers parted Giulio paced his narrow cell with as light a step as if he were in the enjoyment of full liberty. He forgot the scene. The prison walls crumbled away. The blue sky of Italy was overhead, flowers springing up at his feet, the melody of birds and falling waters in his ears, and she beside him, the charm and joy of his existence. From this paradisiacal dream he was recalled to earth by the grating of his door upon its hinges. A light figure stole to his side. It was the page.

"So soon returned, my Mercury?" said Giulio.

"I returned long ago," said the page, "but I could not come hither before. Indeed, I had not many leagues to ride, for I met the Duke of Milan in arms, and on the march hither."

"Then Heaven be praised Liberty is not far distant."

"Ere to-morrow's dawn you will hear the trumpets of Milan at the gates."

"Gallant kinsman!" cried Giulio. "Would I were free to share your danger and mount with you to the assault. Boy, you have done me a priceless service; if fortune smile, I will requite you loyally."

"Your words are an ample compensation," said the page. "But if I might crave a boon, I would pray you to bestow on me that little ring I see on your left hand."

"It has no value, it is a simple circlet of gold," said the prince, drawing off the ring.

"Have you not worn it?" asked the page reproachfully.

"You are sentimental," said the prince, smiling; "but take it, and let it be a token of friendship. And if, intoxicated by freedom and success, Giulio Veroni forget his obligation to you, the sight of that ring will recall it to his mind. But fear not, boy—I shall never forget. I shall not, I think, exhibit the infirmity of princes—ingratitude. And now, good night."

The page kneeled and kissed the prince's hand. His lips were warm and soft, and he shed tears as he performed this act of homage. Giulio smiled, though he was touched at this boyish enthusiasm.

"I have certainly the faculty of making friends," he thought, as the door closed on his retiring visitor.

Some time after this, he was making preparations to retire for the night, when the door again swung open to admit another prisoner, and was then again locked. The new comer rushed forward and threw himself at the prince's feet. It was Tonio, the jester.

"Master! master!" said the faithful fellow, "we have fallen on evil days. Don't blame me. I would have prevented the scoundrels from getting at you in the villa, but they surprised me. I was helpless."

"I do not blame you. I never doubted your fidelity," said the prince, raising him.

"We are all in the power of the tyrant," said the jester, dismally. "Yourself, the signorina and the poor fool. What will become of us? Marry, I feel that they will send the signorina to a convent for life—you will be beheaded, and as for me, they'll make minced meat of me with their chopping knives, and toss me to the dogs."

"You talk like a fool," said the prince.

"Then I speak in character," moaned the jester, "and that's a great consolation. It doesn't much matter about me. For I've lived like a fool, and it's a sort of promotion to die like a martyr. But you, my noble young master, the flower of Italy, to be cut off in the prime of life, by the ferocity of an avuncular relative. O, why were uncles ever invented? I am glad I was a foundling, and never troubled with relations. Once I had great expectations—cultivated a red mark on my left shoulder, and expected to prove the heir to a title and a principality. But I don't want my relations to come forward now. I'm afraid of 'em."

"I didn't expect you to be downcast," said the prince.

"O, of course not! It's my duty to be funny under every circumstance. But let me tell you, master of mine, that professional gaiety is the least reliable of all resources, and if they were

to hang me to-morrow morning, I don't think that I should have the least bit of a joke with Jack Ketch. It's your sad dogs that are merry ones in the last of the drama."

"But we haven't got to the *exeunt omnes* yet, my friend," said the prince, smiling. "I have good news for you."

"Not before they're wanted."

"Hear me—if you can be rational one moment."

"I'm all ears. like a donkey," said the jester.

"The Duke of Milan is marching on to Parma."

"Good!" cried the jester.

"He will be here to-morrow morning at the furthest."

"Better!" exclaimed Tonio. "Go on, my, lord, this is fine."

"You can conjecture what will happen next."

"Or I were no conjuror," replied the jester. "A demand for the unconditional surrender of the prisoners. Refusal. Slam bang! cut and slash, kick and hack; gunpowder and steel, broken heads, battering-rams, lots of smoke—glory of victory. We are free—the usurper falls into our hands. We torture him a little, just by way of pastime, then chop off his head and set it on the city gates as a warning to all such carrion scoundrels."

"No, Tonio, banishment is the heaviest penalty I could find it in my heart to inflict on my worst enemy."

"You are too merciful by half. But are you sure of your intelligence, my lord?"

"As of my life."

"Who informed you."

"An angel."

"Enough. I doubt no longer. And now, master—let us go to sleep and dream of a glorious awakening on the morrow."

CHAPTER XI.

THE MYSTERIOUS VISITOR.

The Lady Estella sat alone in the private apartment of the princess, in which the lamps had not been lighted. The soft starlight, however, and the beams of a young moon detached her light and graceful figure, as she leaned upon the marble window-seat from the shadowy back-ground of the apartment. Sad enough she was at heart, but she exhibited no external trace of emotion. She had passed through the phases of indignation and

passionate grief; words of defiance were hushed, tears of passionate sorrow dried. Reverently, prayerfully had she bowed her spirit, and from her commune with the sole Power that could aid her in her distress, she had risen in a better frame, though still despondent. From her stirless position she was aroused by a bustle in the ante-room, and presently, the door opening, a female figure entered and moved towards her.

"Estella?" said a gentle voice.

"I recognise you by the tone, lady," said Estella, "for I cannot distinguish your features. None but the Princess Margarita could speak so gently to a lonely prisoner."

"Call me sister," said the princess, in the same sweet voice.

"Nay, lady," replied Estella, "I cannot—must not—forget the distance which separates you, the titled lady, from me, the humble maiden."

"Speak not of my rank," said the princess sadly. "It reminds me of our shame. Alas! I am no longer ignorant that my father and myself are decked in borrowed plumes—that the splendour tha. surrounds us is not ours of right—and that one wave of the stern hand of justice may dissolve this stately pageant that environs me."

"No blame attaches to yourself, lady, in the course of events that placed your father on the throne."

"Whatever tarnishes his name is a brand upon my brow," replied the princess. "But let me do my part in mitigating the severity of his decrees at least. You are given to my charge—but your prison house shall be my arms. Believe me, I shall not be a cruel jailer. If you will await me here one moment, I will summon the attendants with lights."

"Do you not prefer the twilight glimmer of the moon and stars?" asked Estella.

"If you prefer them—certainly," replied the princess.

She came and sat down beside Estella and took her hand.

"You declined just now to call me sister—you would not hesitate if you knew what had recently occurred."

"Indeed, lady!"

"Yes—something to draw us near to each other, Estella. I have lately seen your brother."

"Giulio? In his prison?"

"He is in confinement, but he is not treated with unusual severity. His limbs are free—my father has not dared to add chains to imprisonment."

"Thank Heaven for that."

"He learned from me that you were here."

"Thanks—thanks."

"And that you were given to my charge; and he bade me be the messenger of his love to you."

"Was it with that you left him?"

"Nay—sister—" faltered the princess. "He told me that he loved me—and I—"

"You checked his aspirations?"

"I confessed my love for him."

"Ah! we are sisters then in heart!" cried the young girl, throwing herself into the princess's arms, and weeping for joy.

"But why am I thus elated!" exclaimed Estella, suddenly checking her expressions of delight. "I forget the actual circumstances in which we are placed—Giulio regarded as an enemy by your father, and in prison. There is an unsurmountable barrier between him and yourself."

"His life is safe," cried the princess, "while my life is spared. My father loves me tenderly. With all his faults, there is that brilliant ray of sunshine in the darkness of his nature. Much may be hoped from that."

Estella shook her head.

"Love of power, fear of a rival," she said, "are motives strong enough to stifle even his love for you. Were that our sole reliance, Giulio might linger out his life in a dungeon, or perish there by the hand of violence."

"You appal me!" said the princess.

"Let me be a comforter in turn," said Estella. "Giulio has powerful friends without, who may demand his liberation in a manner not to be refused."

"But how will they learn his position?"

"They cannot remain long in ignorance. The deserted villa—the abduction of Giulio known to the peasantry will soon tell the tale. If Giulio is saved from immediate violence, something may be hoped."

"Then we will be of good cheer," replied the princess. "For my life shall be the guaranty of Giulio's safety. But the night is wearing on, dearest; both of us, shaken by emotion, have need of repose. I presume," she added, smiling, "my duty to my father requires that my charge should not go out of my sight. You will, therefore, share my couch to-night. Shall I summon my attendants to disrobe you?"

"I am used to perform that service for myself," replied Estella. "And if you will permit me to be your handmaiden, I think you will not regret the absence of hirelings."

"Willingly, dearest," replied the princess. "I am weary of

the forms of state. The attendants of the great are spies—their attachment only mercenary. Come, then, to my chamber."

The princess and her guest passed then to an inner apartment. Long after they had retired, they talked of their innocent hopes and wishes, until, wearied out at last, they breathed their holy prayer to Heaven, and sunk to repose in a sisterly embrace. So sound was their first sleep that neither of them was awakened by the shrill blast of a trumpet piercing the ear of night, and borne on the breeze through the open windows of the palace. Whatever this sound portended, it soon subsided. But the slumbers of Margarita were broken by a different cause. An ice-cold hand laid upon her warm cheek awoke her instantly.

"Hush! no noise!" said a voice, "or you will rouse your companion."

The princess, much perturbed, passed her hand over her brow in the effort to collect her scattered senses, and gently disengaged herself from the arms of Estella. By her bedside stood, dimly illuminated by the moonlight, a graceful female figure, clad in Persian or Turkish costume. From the dim countenance eyes of fiery lustre shone forth like stars in the night, and seemed to gaze into the very soul of the princess.

"Who are you? whence come you?" asked Margarita.

"No matter who I am, or whence I come. My purpose is sufficient. Arise and follow me to the next room, or you will awake yon sleeper. There is no time to be lost. Deny me, and you will ever regret it."

"But how did you obtain admission into my private apartment?"

"No place is sacred to my footsteps when I will," replied the stranger. "But arise quickly—I command you."

Margarita was not exempt from the superstitions of the age. She scarcely doubted that the being before her belonged to the world of spirits, and obeying a will stronger than her own, she rose from her couch, and followed the visitor into the next room, where she sank upon a seat and breathlessly awaited the promised communication.

"I disturbed a dream of fantastic bliss," said the stranger. "Start not—I can read your very soul. You were dreaming of Giulio Brigaldi."

"Alas! what unhallowed power do you possess?" cried the princess.

"There are no secrets from me," replied the mysterious visitor. "This night you saw him in his dungeon."

"It is useless to deny it."

"He told you that he loved you, and you confessed your love to him."

The princess suffered her head to sink upon her breast. She was appalled and abashed.

"The sooner," pursued the visitor, "that you dismiss this fantastic dream from your mind, the better for your repose. Giulio loves another."

"It is false!" said the princess, shaking off the fear which had enthralled her. "Whoever you are, mortal or spirit—woman or fiend—I spurn the false assertion."

The strange lady smiled, and extended her left hand.

"Do you recognise this ring?" she asked, triumphantly.

The moonbeams fell upon the fair hand of the mysterious visitant, and illumined the little circlet of gold to which the princess's attention was directed, and which was of a peculiar construction. She was confounded as she recognised it.

"I saw it," she faltered, "this evening on Giulio's hand; how came you in possession of it?"

"It is a precious family heir-loom," replied the stranger. "Dying, Giulio's mother bestowed it on him, with the injunction to wear it until he plighted his love, and then to bestow it on the object of his affections. To you, he gave no pledge—to me, his mother's gift. You are warned. Profit by the warning."

"But this is dreadful!" said the princess, wringing her hands. "But come what may," she added, starting up, "you shall not leave this apartment till I know who you are. I will summon my attendants."

"Silence!" said the stranger. "You are completely in my power. Your attendants, drugged with medicated wine, sleep a leaden sleep most like to death. You are helpless, while I am armed. Advance one step toward me—utter a word above your breath, and your doom is sealed!"

As these words were uttered in a tone of determination, an unsheathed poniard suddenly gleamed in the woman's right hand. The princess was powerless as a child.

"Back to your chamber!" said the stranger, in a commanding tone. "Know that there are those who laugh to scorn the power of duke and princess here in Parma. Back to your couch and ponder on my warning. It was for your peace I came to you to-night. Do not make me repent my condescension."

Disheartened, distressed, appalled, the princess obeyed without a murmur, and retired, closing the door behind her.

"May this stratagem rid me of a rival, and turn her love to hate!" said Zélie, the astrologer's daughter, when she was left

alone. "Next—to poison his mind—and then to win him by those arts that I am mistress of, when his liberty is secured. He shall love me, or he shall die by steel or poison. But I—" she murmured, shuddering at the images her imagination conjured up, "I shall not survive him."

Lifting the velvet hanging, and pressing the spring of a secret panel, she glided away like a spectre, and was soon in the suite of apartments occupied by her father.

CHAPTER XII

THE SUMMONS AND THE ANSWER.

The sound of the trumpet, which failed to awaken the sleeping princess and her companion, roused the troops that manned the walls, as it broke on the silence of the night. A subaltern officer who held command at one of the gates, on looking, beheld a horseman in armour, bearing a flag of truce depending from his lance, and accompanying a mounted herald who had blown the shrill summons to the garrison.

As the herald refused to communicate his business to an inferior officer, Ferrado was sent for, and speedily made his appearance on the summit of a bastion, clad from head to heel in plate armour, beautifully inlaid with gold, while a towering plume of snow-white feathers tossed upon his crest, and the spurs of knighthood glittered on his heels.

"Behold," said he, "Ferrado Montaldo, commandant of the garrison of Parma, by the grace of his kinsman, the duke. And now, who are ye, who thus come in the dead of night, to break the slumbers of a peaceful city?"

The herald raised his visor, while the man-at-arms beside him lifted a torch he bore in his left hand, so as to throw its full ruddy light on the face of his companion.

"Sir commandant," said the herald, "in me you behold the herald king-at-arms to his grace the Duke of Milan, who is close at hand. My noble master has learned that his grace of Parma has caused to be seized, in the dead of night, in his peaceful residence at Monte Rosa, the person of Giulio, son to the late Duke of Parma, and kin to his grace of Milan; that he brought him into this city like a criminal, and that he has, without a shadow of cause, without trial, without hear-

ing, deprived him of his liberty, and shut him up, like a felon, in a dungeon."

"And if this were true," replied Ferrado, haughtily, "is not his grace of Parma as sovereign within his own state, as your master in Milan? Giulio was his vassal, over whom he has power of life and limb."

"It is true, then, that he is a prisoner?"

"I do not seek to deny it," answered Ferrado.

"Then listen to the remainder of my message, sir knight. His grace of Milan saith as follows. He is here present with a powerful army, outnumbering, ten to one, that of Parma, whose weak walls can ill support an onset. If, saith my master, by sunrise to-morrow, the Prince Giulio be set free and delivered to his hand, all is well; my master will depart in peace, and the friendly relations of Milan and Parma will not be disturbed; but if, blind to his own interests and a sense of honour, the Duke of Parma neglects to comply with this just demand, that his grace of Milan will proceed against him as against a foul traitor, a dishonoured knight, and a deadly enemy. He will advance to the assault of these walls, and in two hours will be master of Parma."

"These are boastful words," replied Montaldo, "and ere I report them to my master, I must be satisfied that Milan has power to make them good. I doubt the force he brings against us."

"You shall be satisfied of that, sir knight," replied the herald.

Wheeling his horse about, he took the torch from his attendant, and waving it three times over his head, threw it high into the air. It was instantly answered by the sudden blaze of a beacon-fire in the midst of the dusky plain that stretched away before the walls, and then, as if by magic, thousands of torches were instantly kindled, and the whole country was a-blaze. It appeared to the astonished eyes of Montaldo, as if daylight had suddenly dawned; but what was his surprise when he saw that each torch was held by a man-at-arms, perfectly equipped in steel. There were clouds of archers with long-bows and cross-bows—there were masses of splendidly mounted cavalry, and dense columns of infantry, their armour shining like black water in the torchlight, while the fierce blaze was reflected by the polished tubes of an immense park of artillery. Suddenly every torch was extinguished, and the splendidly-appointed and formidable host was swallowed up in a darkness that seemed Cimmerian, from its contrast with the recent effulgence, though the night was by no

means dark, and after awhile, Montaldo, now that he knew their position, could still descry the frowning masses of the enemy.

"I will repeat your message to his grace," he said calmly, "if you will await my return."

Descending from the walls, he mounted his horse, and rode in hot haste to the palace, where he was instantly admitted to the presence of the duke, whom he found pacing his apartment with feverish impatience.

"Well, Montaldo, what is it—this summons?"

"Milan is at the gates."

"As I surmised and feared."

"He has sent a herald to say that the Duke of Milan has word of the imprisonment of Giulio."

"You denied the fact," said the duke

"I could not deny it."

"It matters not—what next?"

"The Duke of Milan demands that Giulio be given up to him to-morrow morning at sunrise."

"What if I decline compliance with this arrogant demand?"

"He threatens to storm the city."

"Does he come in force?"

"He has force enough, my lord, to carry the city by assault."

"How know you that?" asked the duke.

"At a signal from the herald, the camp was suddenly lighted up by thousands of torches, and I beheld with my own eyes the entire strength of the enemy. On the word of a soldier, my liege, a better appointed army never took the field."

"The sight has terrified you, Ferrado," said the duke, though his own cheek was blanched with dismay, and his lip quivered even as he taunted his officer.

"Not so, my liege. I am ready to defend the city to the last gasp."

The duke remained for a few moments silent, and plunged in deep and painful thought. At last he raised his head, and said:

"Ferrado, I will accede to the demand."

"Shall I so notify the herald?"

"Yes—tell him that by sunrise to-morrow morning, the Prince Giulio shall be escorted to the camp of Milan with a guard of honour befitting his birth."

A gleam of satisfaction lighted up the face of the commander, as this decision was communicated to him.

"I am glad of this, my liege," he said, heartily. "You have

not only saved your city, but your honour. Open to Prince Giulio an honourable career elsewhere, and he will never disturb your peace."

"You are a profound politician, my Ferrado," said the duke, with a crafty smile. "You must lay aside your plume and armour, and become my minister of state."

"I had rather deal hard blows than pore over parchments." replied Ferrado.

"There are no more hard blows to deal henceforth, my fair kinsman," said the duke. "We have arranged all that. Milan will be a faster ally than before, and if a hand be raised against us, Giulio, grateful for his liberty, will strike it down. Do you not think so?"

"I do sincerely, my lord," replied Ferrado, frankly.

"Then go to the wall with your message, and send back yon herald to his master He must be tired by this time of a chill seat in the saddle."

"Ferrado made his obeisance, and hastened to perform his errand.

"Fool! idiot!" muttered the duke. "A boy could hoodwink him. But they shall have Giulio, and I wish them joy of their acquisition."

Leaving the duke, let us return to the chamber of the Princess Margarita. After her interview with her mysterious visitant, she found it impossible to sleep. An irresistible desire to communicate with Giulio took possession of her. She could not credit the tale of his duplicity. Her generous nature told her that it was impossible that he could be guilty of deception, and the idea of some dark plot against his happiness as well as hers, took possession of her mind. She resolved, therefore, to see him at all hazards.

Hastily dressing herself, she left her suite of apartments with a noiseless step, and traversing the passages that communicated with the prison, every door of which was open to her at all hours, for her father had commanded all his vassals to pay her the same obedience as to himself, she found and roused up the jailer from his sleep on a bench. Matteo rubbed his eyes, and gazed with astonishment upon her.

"Has morning broke so soon?" he asked, growlingly.

"No," replied the princess. "I have disturbed your slumbers, but you can resume them when you have accomplished my will."

"And what is it, lady?"

"I command you to bring hither the prisoner, Prince Giulio, committed to your charge yesterday."

The jailer hesitated.

"Did his grace, the duke, command it?" he asked.

"Vassal! your duty is obedience," said the princess, haughtily. "Know you this signet ring with the ducal coronet?"

She extended her hand as she spoke, and the man, after gazing on the token, hesitated no longer. Clashing his bunch of heavy keys, he shuffled away down the long, dark corridor, and in a few moments returned with Prince Giulio.

"Now leave us," said the princess, "and return hither in ten minutes."

The jailer bowed and retired.

"Giulio," said the princess, taking his hand, "answer me one question. "Where is the ring you wore upon this finger when we parted to-day?"

"I have bestowed it as a gift," replied the prince, no less astonished at the question than at her appearance in the prison at the dead of the night.

"A gift!" said the princess, falteringly. "To whom?"

"To your page—Selim—as a token that I would not be unmindful of the service he had rendered me."

"What service?"

"Know you not? But I forgot; you cannot know anything about it. For my sake, braving every peril, he rode forth to-day and communicated my situation to my kinsman of Milan."

"He breathed not a word to me about this errand."

"Doubtless he questioned your interest in my fate. In fact, he suspects you of being my enemy."

"I! *your* enemy, Giulio!"

"Do not blame him. He naturally thought that you would take your father's side."

"He knew me better. O Giulio, I fear that boy is an enemy of both. I fear, I know not what—that some dark intrigue is weaving round—that your life is in peril. Prompt action alone can save you. You must fly."

"Fly? You mock my situation, dearest—a prisoner."

"But I possess power equal to my father, at least for a while. In a few hours my privileges may—nay, doubtless will be, withdrawn. But I to-night possess my father's signet ring. It will give you liberty."

"But you will share my flight?"

"Nay; I cannot leave my father, guilty though he is. And I must remain to cover your retreat, and to protect your sister."

"But must I leave my poor, faithful Tonio?"

"No harm can come to him. His low estate protects him

from danger, and I will guarantee him from persecution. Follow me; I will be your guide through these labyrinthine passages. You will soon be at liberty; but, O Giulio, if you advance in arms against your native city, forget not that the poor inhabitants have done you no harm, and, if you are tempted to punish my poor father, remember it was his daughter set you free."

"I will never forget that he is your father, my guardian angel; my benefactress; my own true love!" cried the prince, passionately. And at this moment the jailer returned.

"The time has expired," said he, looking doubtfully at Giulio and Margarita. "The prince must return to his cell."

"The prince does not return to his cell," said the princess, firmly. "He goes with me."

"But I dare not—" faltered the man.

"I dare assume the responsibility," said the princess. "And you dare not gainsay my authority. Have I not the signet ring? Only say nothing of this event. If the duke himself inquire respecting the prisoner, say that he is safe. To-morrow, early, I will place you beyond all reach of danger—and here, here," she tore off her priceless jewels, and thrust them into his hand. "Here is an earnest of what I will do for you."

The sight of this unhoped-for wealth vanquished all scruples of the sordid jailer, with whom unsatisfied avarice had been a gnawing passion.

"Enough," he growled; "away with you—I will trust your promises—and my luck."

With a light and swift step the princess led away her ransomed lover, while the jailer, thrusting her gifts into his bosom, lay down again upon his bench, coiled up like a dog. But he was not destined that night to enjoy the sweet boon of sleep. He had hardly closed his eyes again, and begun to dream of the mines of Golconda, when a shake of the shoulder roused him to his feet. To his horror the Duke of Parma stood before him.

"Matteo," he asked, in a hoarse whisper, "how is the prisoner?"

"When I went my rounds last, he was fast asleep," said the jailer, trembling lest the duke had come to visit him in person.

"It is well," said the duke. "Now, hear me. The prisoner must never see the sun rise."

"Am I to get the block and axe ready?"

"No. He dies by a swifter and surer means. Take this phial," and the duke handed the jailer the potion he had received from the astrologer. "Put a few drops of this on every

article of his food and in his wine, and serve him his meal at the grey of dawn. He eats well?"

"Freely, my lord."

"Ten minutes after he has partaken of his food, he will be a livid corpse. In the meantime, I have given orders for a suit of knightly armour to be prepared wherein to dress the corpse, and a coffin to enclose the remains. Now hear me—accomplish your mission faithfully, and I will make you rich—fail in it, and your head shall answer for your remissness."

"My lord," said the jailer, "your will shall be accomplished."

"Enough," replied the duke. "I know that I can trust you."

And, ghastly pale at the thought of the deed he had commanded, the duke retired to his palace, leaving the jailer overwhelmed with the responsibility that rested on him.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ESCAPE—THE JAILER'S PROJECT.

GIULIO, guided by Margarita, was conducted safely through the corridors of the prison into the palace, where there was less vigilance and less danger of observation. Yet she trembled every moment at the idea of a chance of detection. In passing from the prison to the palace, Giulio paused once. Hanging within reach on the wall of a narrow passage a sword was suspended. He detached it, and felt a thrill of pleasure as he grasped the hilt of the familiar weapon.

"Dearest," said he to the princess, "I will make bold to appropriate this weapon."

"Take it," said the princess. "Never could it be in better hands."

"I shall not be unmindful of the device on the blade," said the prince. "This steel may be reddened with blood—alas! but it shall not be crimsoned with shame."

"Hasten, prince! Our time is precious."

Giulio checked her with one word.

"Estella!"

"I will inform her of your safety."

"I must see my sister, dearest, ere I leave these walls. I must have her parting kiss as well as thine, for a talisman."

"It is hazardous."

"I will not answer so much the better, for that were bravado; but I will say that I am willing to incur the risk."

The princess then, not without some trepidation at the thought of the delay, ushered Giulio into a small room, the door of which was provided with bolt and bar, and having recommended him to fasten it, and agreed upon a signal by which she might make herself known on her return, hastened to her own apartment, where she found Estella buried in a tranquil sleep.

"Hist, Estella," she said, touching her lightly.

The sleeper stirred.

"It is of Giulio I wish to speak!" said the princess, arousing her.

"Is he safe? is he well?" asked Estella, starting up.

"Safe and well. But are you thoroughly awake?"

"Perfectly."

"And able to understand what I say?"

"I am broad awake, dear princess."

"Then rise, my love; wrap yourself in a cloak, and follow me quickly and silently."

Estella, who placed implicit confidence in her new friend, obeyed, and was soon prepared to accompany her.

The two lovely young women traversed the suite of apartments with rapid steps, and soon stood before the door of the apartment in which Giulio was awaiting them. The princess clapped her hands thrice—the preconcerted signal; the door was opened, and Estella, with her friend, stood in the presence of her brother.

"Brother! dearest brother!" said Estella, as she rushed into his arms, "how happens it that you are free?"

"My liberator stands beside you," said the prince.

The embrace of the warm-hearted young girl was transferred to the princess, who blushed with pleasure and embarrassment as she received the tokens of gratitude.

"You meet but to part, Estella," she said, after a brief pause. "I must separate you."

"Separate us?"

"Yes—Giulio must fly."

"O, brother! take me with you!" cried Estella, clinging to his arm.

"Nay, dearest, I have dangers and perils to encounter."

"No matter."

"You would but impede my flight."

"Then, indeed, I must remain," said Estella, with a sigh.

"You must; but we shall meet again shortly. I am sure of

it," said the prince, earnestly. "Heaven has smiled upon me, and sent me a guardian angel in the midst of my enemies. I shall return, ere many hours, perhaps—I feel it—conquering and to conquer. My banner shall float gloriously on these very walls. Fear nothing. Now that I have seen you, dear sister, received your embrace, and felt the pressure of your lips, I go forth with a light heart."

"Farewell, then, dear brother, and may Heaven prosper you," said Estella.

"Remain here till my return," whispered the princess.

Once more, then, Giulio and his brave and gentle guide sallied forth. She took him to the confines of the palace yard, and opened a wicket for him to pass forth. She whispered in his ear the word that would carry him past the sentinels, minutely described the path that he must take, and then, as a last gift, bestowed upon him the duplicate ducal signet-ring she wore, only enjoining it on him not to use it, except in the most urgent need. A hurried expression of gratitude, fervent and sincere, though brief, a warm and close embrace, and the lovers parted.

But what has become of Matteo, the jailer, whom we left confounded by the parting injunctions of the duke? He sat on the bench holding the phial in his hand, and racking his brain with perplexing questions and projects.

"What"—thus ran the current of his thoughts—"what am I to do? I fear I have run my neck into a halter, and thrust my hand into an iron glove too far to draw it back again. The princess has bestowed almost a fortune on me in these gems. What if I were to pitch these keys into the well and leave the prison to take care of itself? Impossible—I am forbidden to leave my post without a written order. I should be sent back; suspicion would be awakened; the whole would come out, and then the halter or the axe would be my reward. I must think of something better than that. Ha! I have it!" he thought, after a giant effort of his intellect. "There is one chance to avoid detection, and only one. It is a forlorn hope, but it may succeed. The jester shall take the place of the prince. The duke said that Giulio must die before sunrise; therefore, there must be great haste required in whatever scheme he is concocting. The body may be huddled into the grave without an examination or verification of identity. I am ready to swear to anything. It shall be done."

With these words the ruffian arose and went to his apartment, where he prepared the materials for a substantial breakfast. Unsealing a flask of wine, he poured several drops from the phial

into it and then re-sealed it. A cold fowl was sprinkled with the liquid; several slices of bread were thus prepared—bunches of grapes and some dried figs also received the potion. Setting them out on a tray, he mingled with them a flask of unadulterated wine, and some bread and fruit, carefully marked, so that he could identify the articles, and, thus prepared, sought the cell of the jester.

Tonio was buried in a profound sleep. Roused by a rough shake of the shoulder, he started up, and his eyes encountered the face of the jailer bending over him, and rendered more hideous by the ferocious grin he assumed in token of good fellowship.

"Come," said the jailer, "are you going to sleep all day? It's high time to be up and stirring."

"One never knows the difference between daylight and dark in this dark hole," said the jester, obeying the summons. "But where is the prince?"

"O, he has been liberated," said the jailer, with what was intended to be a pleasant smile. "And I suppose you'll be sent for before long, for the duke, Heaven bless him! told me to get you the best breakfast I could provide. And so I have brought you a regale fit for a prince of the blood. Bread as white as the snow on the Appenines; wine too, you varlet, genuine Lachryma Christi, and such grapes! My own mouth waters, and, i' faith! I have e'en invited myself to breakfast with you."

"It must be a consoling reflection to you, my friend," said the jester, "to think, when you design a visit to any of your friends here, that you are sure to find them at home."

"Ho! ho! good! an excellent jest, i' faith," said the jailer.

"Jesting is my trade, friend," said Tonio, "as yours is turning the key on better men than thyself."

"Come, now, my employment is not quite so monotonous," said the jailer, "for I'm a favourite with my noble master, and sometimes when the prisoner is to be tortured, I'm allowed my turn at the rack; and when the headsman is indisposed, I take his place on his scaffold. I've learned to handle the axe quite dexterously. And, my dear fellow, if your affairs should take an unlucky turn, I should solicit the pleasure of putting you out of your misery."

"Thank you," said the jester. "But I had much rather breakfast at your expense, than have you take a chop at mine."

"Well, here's your breakfast all ready on this table," said Matteo. "Draw your stool close and I'll sit by you. I'm used to carving. What part of this fowl do you prefer?"

"I prefer the legs and wings, the breast, back, and thigh, if you please," said the jester. "In a word, give me the whole bird."

"I'm glad you've so good an appetite," said the jailer.

"It's a chronic complaint with me," answered Tonio. "This is a capital chicken. Try some."

"I can't eat so early in the morning," said the jailer, excusing himself. "Here's a morsel of biscuit will serve my turn."

"This bread and fowl make me thirsty," said the jester, after eating heartily.

"Here's a bottle of capital wine," returned the jailer, breaking the seal and drawing the cork. "It has been in the duke's cellar for forty years."

"Fill up a cup for your trouble," said the jester.

"Thank ye—but I brought a brace of bottles of the same sort," replied the jailer. "There's one apiece. Each to his flagon. Good luck to you."

"The same to you."

"Here's trade!" shouted the jailer.

"Ahem!" said the jester. "I can hardly drink to yours."

"Then here's wit and humour, and may they ever bring fortune to their possessor!" said the jailer, filling his glass.

"Jailer!" said the jester, growing suddenly affectionate, "you're an honest fellow—you've feasted me like a prince."

"Don't thank me for your entertainment," said the jailer, modestly, "but the duke, my master."

"Here's your good health!" cried the jester. "Faith! his breakfast has improved my opinion of him amazingly. I can't think he means to play me a knavish trick."

"He! bless you—he means well enough by you. He means to send you away this very morning."

"I could find it in my heart to hug you for your news!" said the jester, languidly and yawningly, for sleep had begun to creep over him. "But, my dear fellow," he added, speaking with difficulty, "you woke me up too early. I hadn't had half sleep enough. I'm not an early riser. You mistook my habits."

"Why not go to bed again?" asked the jailer.

"Excellent—advice—jailer. I am—very—sleepy—and your wine—was confoundedly strong."

His eyes closed, and he fell back in his chair.

"So soon!" muttered the jailer. "It is wonderful!"

After his eyes were close and his lips mute, there were one or two slight convulsive motions of Tonio's frame, after which all evidence of life was absent. As the jailer was contemplating this

strange spectacle, he was startled by three heavy knocks at the cell-door. Rushing precipitately into the corridor to prevent, if possible, the entrance of the duke, he was relieved to find that the summons was not from his master. Two or three men in sad-coloured liveries were there, who had brought a complete suit of plate armour, with the offensive weapons appertaining to the armament of a cavalier of rank, and a banner blazoned with the arms of Parma, and shrouded with crape. They had also brought a coffin, which was now resting on a bier covered by a black pall.

The spokesman of this group of servitors now approached Matteo, and asked him if he required any assistance.

"No; I have plenty of my own," replied Matteo.

"The duke wishes to know how soon you will be ready."

"In half an hour," replied the jailer.

The attendants retired.

"I breathe freer," said the jailer. "I am saved. The duke will not discover the trick I put upon him till I am beyond the reach of danger."

CHAPTER XIV.

STRANGE SCENES AT THE GATE.

We left Giulio parting from the princess, who had furnished him with every facility for making good his escape. Yet the desire of liberty was less imperative in his bosom than his passion for the lovely daughter of his enemy. To linger near her, even though fate reckoned the moments of life—to forget danger in the intoxication of her presence; these were follies his heart would have prompted him to enact, if his reason had not checked the impulse. Tightening his belt, then grasping the handle of his sword and satisfying himself that the blade played freely in the scabbard, so that it would leap forth to his touch on the occurrence of an emergency, he made his way to the city gates, through which his signet-ring and the assertion that he was a messenger of the duke, readily passed him. Striking into a little wood that crowned a little eminence within a few feet of the city walls, he paused for reflection, and deliberated whether he should immediately repair to the camp of the Milanese army, or remain where he was and reconnoitre the city.

He was inclined to think, that by adopting the latter course, he might discover some circumstance which might be turned to the advantage of his friends. He occupied a position from which he could look down on the ramparts of Parma, while, at the same time, he could, by changing his point of view, have a fair sight of the camp, the lines of which his practised eye could discover, beneath the gradually brightening sky, stretching their dark array across the adjacent plain.

In the city an extraordinary activity reigned. He could hear the clash of weapons and the heavy tread of men-at-arms, as bodies of men were moved from point to point. Dark groups appeared on the walls, and now and then a torch moved along the line of defenders, as if an officer of rank were making a tour of inspection. Meanwhile the sky grew gradually brighter—dawn was breaking in the east. Its chill grey gave place, by degrees, to a warmer hue, betokening the approach of the sun, and finally, bright, horizontal bars of gold along the horizon announced the immediate rising of the orb of day. As its disk shot above the horizon, the ducal banner of Parma was unfolded on the wall, its gorgeously emblazoned folds flashing back the sunbeams that sparkled on its surface. At this moment the shout of "Long live Parma!" broke from the soldiery on the walls.

At the same time the camp of the Milanese army exhibited similar tokens of activity. Lances and steel armour glittered all over the plain. Mounted knights galloped here and there, distributing orders, and the ground shook as ponderous pieces of clumsy artillery, each drawn by many horses, were moved to the front. Before the splendid tent which Giulio recognized as the head-quarters of the Duke of Milan, from a lofty standard staff, the ducal banner was flung out, as that of Parma had been upon the ramparts, while the exultant shout that greeted it betokened the presence of a very formidable host.

And now the swarming masses of the Milanese begin to concentrate themselves, and assume a military regularity of form. They were drawn up in three long lines, occupying the entire width of the plain, with heavy cannon at the intervals, and a broad passage through the centre of the lines. Through this passage there now swept as glorious a cavalcade as ever the sun shone down upon. First came a herald, attired in the splendid habiliments of his calling, surrounded by a band of trumpeters; then rode forth the Duke of Milan, mounted on a milk-white charger, and clad from head to heel in silver armour inlaid with gold, wearing golden spurs and a splendid baldric glittering with

precious stones. Beside him rode a standard bearer, carrying his banner, and he was followed by a large array of knights magnificently mounted and armed, and attended by their squires and pages. The road taken by the cavalcade led directly past the spot where Giulio had taken post. A few steps would have brought him to the feet of his kinsman, but he preferred to remain concealed, and await for a while the progress of events.

The glittering procession advanced to a short distance of the walls, halted, and then the herald, riding out from the foremost group, a parley was sounded on the trumpets. It was answered by a flourish from the ramparts.

The herald then, in the name of the Duke of Milan, asked for an interview with the Duke of Parma.

Ferrado Montaldo, presenting himself as the representative of the duke, answered that his master was unwell and unable to appear, and had commissioned him to parley and treat with the duke.

"There is little need of parley," replied the duke of Milan, riding to the front. "Last night we sent an ultimatum to your master, viz., that at sunrise this morning, our kinsman should be delivered into our hands. We received the assurance, and from your lips, that the request should be complied with. We have not hurried your preparations [illegible] till the sun had appeared above the horizon did we leav[illegible] [illegible]es. We now await the redemption of your promise."

"Alas, my lord!" replied Ferrado, "I am deeply pained—inexpressively grieved to be the messenger of evil tidings. A heavy misfortune hath befallen us. The ways of Providence are inscrutable—in the midst of life we are in death."

"Out on thy paltering delays, sirrah!" shouted the duke. "Cease prating like a shaveling monk, and tell us at once, like a man and a soldier, what hath chanced."

At this point Giulio listened with the intensest curiosity, anxious to learn what story the Duke of Parma had conjured up to beguile the ear of Milan. What was his astonishment when he heard Ferrado's reply!

"My lord," faltered Montaldo, "it is my painful duty to inform you that the Prince Giulio is no more."

"Giulio no more!" cried the duke. "My kinsman dead! By Heaven, I believe it not. Men die not in their youth and health so suddenly, save in battle, unless foul play is wrought them. Go back to your master, and tell him that Conrado d'Este, Duke of Milan, proclaims him a liar, flouts the tale of his kinsman's decease, and defies him to mortal combat."

"My lord," said Montaldo, "were not allowance to be made for grief and disappointment, this conference should break off here. But I know what you feel. I loved Prince Giulio; all loved who knew him; and the intelligence of his death nearly unmanned me when it was communicated to me this morning. You even doubt the story of my friend's death, and I acknowledge that it needs confirmation. Alas! at this moment the proof is approaching."

Giulio listened and gazed in astonishment. He acquitted Ferrado of all intention of deception, and regarded him as the dupe of the Duke of Parma But how this imposition was to be carried out to the end baffled his imagination. As he gazed from his hiding-place, however, he beheld the city gates opening, and forth, with the waving of the banners of the church, with monks walking bare-headed and bare-footed, chanting a funeral dirge, with trumpets wailing low and mournfully, with soldiers marching with trailed arms, came forth a dismal procession escorting a coffin placed upon a velvet covered bier. Over it waved the ducal banner of Parma shrouded with crape, and beside it walked Ferrado Montaldo, who had descended from the wall to do honour to the obsequies

The procession advanced to the Duke of Milan, where it halted and set down the bier at the [illegible] his charger. Dismounting, the duke knelt beside the [illegible] burst into a flood of tears.

"O, heavy day!" [illegible] "Giulio! Giulio! would that you could hear me Would that you could hear me accuse myself of my long inaction and indifference to your cause Proud eaglet of a royal race, thou shouldst have filled the eyrie where a foul kite now holds his state. But thou shalt not fill the grave unavenged."

Starting to his feet, he exclaimed:

"This is not a deed of Providence It is a foul murder."

"And who is the murderer, my lord?" asked Ferrado

"Thy master!" shouted the duke.

"I must not listen to this language," said Ferrado.

"Thou must bear it to thy master from me," said the duke. And tearing off his mailed gauntlet, he flung it the feet of the equerry. "And with it," added the duke, "this my defiance and challenge to mortal combat."

Montaldo took up the gauntlet.

"I could not have chosen a fitter messenger," said the duke, "for thou art his accomplice in guilt."

"Thou shalt answer that charge at the sword's point," retorted Montaldo.

"What! fight with thee, vassal!" exclaimed the duke. "Only with his equals does Conrado d'Este deign to cross swords."

"I shall soon be thy equal, proud duke," answered Montaldo, "for know that I am to wed the Princess of Parma."

"When thou art wed will be time enough to bandy words with me," said the indignant duke.

Without uttering another word, Montaldo, accompanied by the funeral escort, retired within the walls of the city, the gates of which were secured behind him.

"Giulio hath been foully dealt with," said the duke. "Quickly—an armorer here! and a skilful mediciner. We must examine the body on the spot."

At the summons, a surgeon and an armorer stepped forth. The latter, at a word from the duke, removed the coffin lid, while the former proceeded to an examination of the body.

"He is not dead, my lord! He lives!" said the leech, after a hasty examination.

"Raise him up! give him air!" cried the duke, rushing forward. "Remove the visor of his helmet."

His orders were promptly obeyed, and the removal of the casque gave to view the bewildered countenance of the jester.

"Tonio!" exclaimed the duke. "How came the fool there?"

"That is precisely the question the fool was about to ask your grace," said the jester. "I go to bed in my fool's motley, after a hearty breakfast in a prisoner's cell, and I wake up, changed into a knight, and about to be buried alive, for aught I know. A very pleasant fellow, that same jailer of his grace of Parma, my lord, but his wine is confounded strong."

The Duke of Milan stamped his foot, while his cheek and brow burned with crimson rage.

"This is a deadly affront!" he exclaimed. "To pledge me the return of my kinsman, and then not only to break his word, but to insult me with this farce! Dearly shall the traitor duke rue his insolence."

Meanwhile Tonio had been assisted from his uncomfortable resting-place and stood upon his feet. Whether the astrologer had made a mistake in compounding his potion, or whether, as is more likely, the wine and food the jester had swallowed had some qualities that neutralised its potency, certain it is that the effects of the narcotic were much more transitory than had been anticipated. The jester yawned, rubbed his eyes, stretched himself as well as his unwonted apparel would admit, and then he appeared almost perfectly recovered.

"Where is your master, knave?" said the duke, sternly, for he

visited some of his displeasure on the unconscious instrument of the deception which had been practised upon him.

"That I know not, noble duke," replied the jester. "I was placed in his cell and fell asleep beside him. In the morning, when the jailer awoke me, he assured me that the prince had been set at liberty; and furthermore your deponent knoweth not."

"I have heard enough," cried the duke. "Return with me to the camp, and prepare for the assault. If harm hath chanced to one hair of my kinsman's head, I will not leave one stone upon another of this accursed city. The very ground shall be ploughed up and salt sown thereon, so that not a blade of grass shall mark its utter loneliness and ruin."

He sprang upon his charger, the trumpets rang out a bold defiance to the city, and the glittering *cortege* returned at a sharp trot to the camp.

CHAPTER XV.

EXPLANATIONS.—A HOSTILE MEETING.

DESCENDING from the outer wall of the city, without waiting for the opening of the coffin, which indeed, as it took place surrounded by the suite of the Duke of Milan, was witnessed only by himself and followers, and by Giulio from his hiding-place, and was invisible to the officers and troops of the town, Ferrado Montaldo mounted his horse, rode directly to the palace, and was admitted to the presence of the duke, who was waiting his return with great anxiety—an anxiety by no means dispelled by the stern and severe expression of the commandant's countenance.

"Well, Ferrado, what news?" asked the duke.

"I surrendered the body of the unfortunate prince to his kinsman," replied Ferrado, "with an honourable escort befitting his rank; with holy priests walking beside his remains, with cross and banner displayed, and soldiers marching with reversed arms beside one, who, if living, would bravely have led them forth to battle."

"Enough of this eulogy," said the duke impatiently. "What said our cousin of Milan? He was overwhelmed with grief and astonishment?"

"He manifested less of either than indignation," replied Ferrado. "He accused you of foul play, as I myself did this morn-

ing, until you pledged your word as a sovereign and a knight, that Giulio had died a natural death, and that your physician stood ready to testify to the fact."

"You so assured his grace of Milan ?" said the duke.

"He gave me no opportunity," replied Ferrado, "but flung defiance in my face. He threw down his gauntlet, defying you to mortal combat—I took up the gage of battle, and here it is."

With these words, Ferrado laid the mailed gauntlet on the marble table beside the duke.

"You should have let it lie where he flung it," said the duke.

"I am a soldier, sire," replied Ferrado, briefly, "though I have yet my spurs to win. But," he added, "opportunity enough will soon be afforded me."

"How so ?" inquired the duke.

"How so ? The whirlwind you have provoked is now rising. See if you can lull its fury. You rejected my counsel; now reap the benefit of your own."

"You assume a lofty tone, Ferrado."

"I speak frankly and bluntly. If my manner displeases you, you can command me to lay down my commission and resign my sword."

"Nay, nay, Ferrado, I like your frankness," hurriedly replied the duke. "Resign! you are my sole reliance. Beat back these minions of Milan, and the half of all my treasure is yours."

"I am no mercenary," replied Ferrado. "I will fight because they come as enemies to my country, and because, in so doing, you have assured me, nay have sworn, that I am not upholding *crime*."

"I have so sworn," said the duke faintly. "Now, go to my daughter. Take your leave of her; she loves you—a parting word from her will nerve your arm in battle."

Ferrado bowed, and, availing himself of the permission, or rather command of the duke, passed to the apartments of the princess, to which he was readily admitted. As he entered her presence, her attendants, on a sign from her, retired.

"Beauteous lady," said Ferrado, "I come from your father."

"I have but lately returned from an interview with him," replied the princess, blushing deeply, and trembling as she spoke.

"Lady," said the knight, "I come armed with his permission to address you."

"My father's commands are my law," said the princess. "To every wish of his, duty compels me to yield obedience."

Ferrado bowed, yet as he made no reply, the princess continued :

" But there are exceptions to this rule of obedience. I recognize no power in my father to jeopardize the happiness of my entire future. He can claim my love, my service as a daughter, but he cannot mortgage for me the wealth of my young heart's affections. He cannot bid me bind myself at the altar to link my fate for ever to one to whom my heart is not surrendered. Ferrado Montaldo—I esteem and respect you, but brave and worthy as you are, I cannot love you."

" Princess of Parma," replied Ferrado, looking up in her eyes, "I know of none lovelier than thou in this fair land of Italy —and would maintain the assertion at my lance-point. In your service I would do all that a knight may dare, but truth compels me to declare that my heart is given to another."

" We are friends, then," said the princess joyously, " and here is my hand in pledge of it."

Ferrado raised the fair hand of the princess to his bearded lip, and kissed it respectfully.

" Let there be no secrets between us," said the princess, " for we must be fast allies. The love I denied to you, I have bestowed upon another ; I blush not to confess it—our kinsman, the Prince Giulio."

" Prince Giulio !" exclaimed Ferrado. " And yet I behold you joyous and exultant."

" Why not ? He is no longer a prisoner. Hark in thine ear, Ferrado. I will give thee the highest proof of my confidence. Last night I set the prisoner free ; gave to him a passport that ensures his safety, and he is now far removed from danger."

" Then whose body was it," exclaimed Ferrado, " that I this morn, by order of the duke, surrendered to his grace of Milan ?"

" What is this you say, Ferrado ?" cried the princess.

" This morning a coffin with the arms of Parma was brought me from the prison. I was told that Prince Giulio had died suddenly during the night ; your father swore by the visitation of God and not by violence—and that body I surrendered to the Milanese."

" It was some other unfortunate," said the princess.

" Yet your father believes it was the prince."

" Ha !" said the lady, after a moment's reflection. " I begin to see through this mystery. Matteo, the jailer, whose connivance I was compelled to purchase, contrived this deception to ensure his own safety."

" It must be so," said Ferrado. "Thank Heaven and thee,

lady, that Giulio is safe. I can do my duty as a soldier with a clear conscience. Farewell, signora; I must to the walls."

"But not before you bid farewell to one to whose heart you are dearer than a brother."

The princess vanished as she spoke, but in her place stood the radiant figure of Estella.

Ferrado threw himself at her feet.

"Lady," said he, "these may be my last words. I go to repel an assault upon the city; if I fall in the storm, let me at least have the consciousness that I told you that I loved you and that you did not rebuke the boldness."

"Dear, dear Ferrado," murmured Estella.

The mailed warrior sprang to his feet, clasping her in his arms.

"Now," he exclaimed, "I care not what chances. If I fall, at least I have been happy, if even for a moment; and that moment an eternity of bliss."

At that moment the loud blast of a trumpet echoed through the vaulted apartment.

"I must be gone," said the soldier.

"Farewell," said the weeping maiden. "May Heaven protect you! Should you meet with Giulio, forget not he is my brother."

Ferrado sprang from her presence and descended to the street. Ere we follow him it will be necessary to return to Prince Giulio, whom we left astounded and indignant at the series of events he had witnessed from his hiding-place. But for one thing he would have gone down and made himself known to his kinsman, and joined the ranks of his friends. That one consideration was the assertion, extorted from Ferrado by the taunt of the Duke of Milan, that he was to wed the Princess of Parma, and thus become the equal of his opponent in rank. So, instead of joining his friends, and taking his chance of entering the city by assault, he determined to avail himself of the power of entering at his will bestowed upon him by the princess. Therefore, after the train of the duke had retired, he emerged from his retreat and making a long circuit, approached the city by one of the side entrances, and without difficulty secured a passage by the signet-ring. As he pressed forward towards the palace, regardless of his personal danger, and thinking only of the princess and her supposed lover, he suddenly encountered Selim, the page.

"You here!" she exclaimed. "I thought you were beyond danger; for I wrung from Matteo the secret of your evasion.

Yet you were the man of all others I could have wished to meet. Step aside with me into the shadow of this archway. I have that to impart which you must learn at once."

Giulio followed the page, his heart beating with vague and inexplicable fears.

"Whence come you, Selim?" he asked, with a faltering voice.

"From the princess's apartment," replied Zelie.

"Where you have been playing the eavesdropper?"

Giulio's remark was made at random. Zelie blushed deeply.

"It was from a good motive," she murmured.

"And what heard you?" he asked; for jealousy craves for its food, no matter how obtained.

"I saw and heard Ferrado press his suit. I heard him tell her that he came to her with the sanction of her father. To which the princess made reply—the very words dwell in my memory—'My father's commands are law: to every wish of his, duty compels me to yield obedience.' I heard no more. It was enough, and I left them together alone to plight their mutual vows."

"Swear that thou hast spoken the truth," said Giulio, hoarsely.

"I will not swear by the cross," said Zelie, as Giulio offered the cross-hilt of his sword to her lips, "for that oath were not binding on my conscience. It is not the symbol of my faith."

"What oath, then *is* binding on your conscience?" asked Giulio, startled by this bold avowal of infidelity.

"An oath in the name of the prophet of Allah," replied the pretended page. "By my hopes of earthly bliss, of heaven hereafter, by all that man holds dear and holy, I swear that I have faithfully reported to you the meeting and the words of the princess and Montaldo."

"Then hear me swear that I will be avenged on one or both of them," said the prince.

"Be it so," said the page. "But whither are you going?"

"To the palace."

"To certain death!" cried the page.

"I care not—so that it leads to my revenge."

"I can aid you to secure vengeance," said the page, slowly. "But you need not throw away your life. Await my return in this spot, where you are safe. If I come not back in twenty minutes, follow your own plans."

Zelie raised the prince's hand to her lip and kissed it; then [illegible]

vanished with a light footstep. Half of the appointed time passed away, when listening eagerly for every sound, he heard a heavy footstep. Looking forth from the archway in which he was ensconced, he beheld Ferrado alone and moving forward as rapidly as his armour would permit.

"Ferrado Montaldo!" cried Giulio, in a voice so changed with passion, that the equerry did not recognise it, "halt!"

"Who calls me?" cried Montaldo. "I am in haste."

"Giulio Veroni," was the reply.

"The Prince Giulio! here!" exclaimed Montaldo, hurrying into the archway. "By what chance—"

"I exchange no words with traitors," interrupted Giulio. "Draw, villain, and defend thyself."

"The names of villain and Montaldo were never coupled yet," replied the young soldier. "But from you I hear them without anger. In what have I offended you?"

"A coward as well as a traitor!" cried Giulio. "Will nothing move you?" And the prince struck Ferrado a furious blow with the flat of his sword.

Ferrado's weapon quickly flashed in the air, and a fierce combat instantly ensued—unequal, because Ferrado was equipped at all points, while the prince wore no defensive armour. A moment, however, served to cool the passion of the former—he remembered in time with whom he was engaged, and disarming his antagonist, held him completely at his mercy.

"Finish your work now, and slay me," said the prince. "I have no desire to live."

"Live—noble prince," said Ferrado, generously. "Live to repent the wrong you have done my honour. I would fain linger and explain whatever appearances may be against me—but time presses—the troops are clamorous for my presence. Adieu! we shall meet again."

With these words he continued the course this incident had interrupted, while Giulio, picking up his sword, resolved to wait no longer for the page, but made his way to the palace.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SECRET CHAMBER.

But, though Giulio was half crazed with jealousy and passion, he was not bewildered to that extent as utterly to lose sight of

his own safety. Stopping at a small shop or booth kept by a Jew, he exchanged his sad-coloured cloak for one of a brighter hue, and light cap for another, the broad brim and drooping feathers of which effectually concealed his face, and formed, indeed, an efficient disguise except upon the very closest examination. Tossing a handful of ducats to the astounded and delighted Israelite, Giulio continued his way to the palace, nursing his moody and wrathful thoughts, and chafed by his recent defeat. He was near one of the entrances of the pile, when he suddenly encountered the page, issuing forth.

"You here?" exclaimed Zelie, almost angrily. "I thought I told you to remain under the archway."

"I am master of my own actions," replied the prince, haughtily. "Stand aside, boy, and let me pass."

"You should not have come hither; I would soon have joined you. Has anything happened?"

"Montaldo passed the archway."

"He saw you not!" cried the page, anxiously.

"Nay—I called to him."

"Then he explained himself."

"Our intercourse was limited to the crossing of steel blades."

"You are hurt," said the page, springing forward.

"Not in body," replied the prince, gloomily, "but wounded in spirit. Montaldo was victorious."

"A knight armed cap-a-pie could hardly be otherwise. But why are you here?"

"I would see the princess."

"Then go to certain death. The palace is full of your enemies—you will be recognised—slain! The princess will be the first to betray you."

"I care not. I must see her and upbraid her with perfidy."

"Do that when, side by side with your kinsman of Milan, victory perches on your banner, and you enter these walls as a conqueror."

"I cannot endure the delay. Besides, my sister is in their power, and I must know and share her fate."

"You will not see the princess now," persisted Zelie. "She is preparing her for her wedding with Montaldo, which, her father says, must take place immediately."

"I will find her, if in so doing I forfeit my existence."

"Then I must guide and shield you," said the page; "follow me."

Submitting to the leadership of the supposed boy, Giulio followed without hesitation. Zelie opened a wicket gate that gave entrance to the garden, and passing through an alley concealed and shaded by dense foliage, unlocked a door in the wall. They were then at the foot of a staircase, which they ascended, and soon stood within the princess's apartments. They were deserted. Neither Margarita nor any of her attendants, nor the prince's sister, were visible.

"You perceive," said Zelie, "that I did not deceive you. But follow still; I will procure you an interview."

She now approached a picture on the wall, and pressing a spring, the panel on which it was printed slid back, disclosing an opening upon a staircase. Passing through, followed by Giulio, Zelie closed the panel, and then, assuming the lead, first giving her hand to the prince, for the passage was not lighted, he was conducted up a short flight of steps and into a small and neatly furnished room.

"Rest here awhile," she said, "while I go in quest of the lady. Observe the door through which I pass. When you hear the tinkling of a silver bell, you can follow me, but not before. Do not neglect my request, as you did once this morning."

The page vanished, and Giulio sat down to await the signal with all the patience he could summon to his aid. More excitement and adventure had been crowded into the last two days of his life than he had experienced in his whole previous existence, and so strange was the series of events in which he had become involved, that it was hard to persuade himself that all that passed around him was not a feverish dream, and that he should awaken in the peaceful and tranquil solitudes of Monte Rosa. He had about reconciled himself to the monotony of his existence there, when the duke's hunting party came to disturb his equanimity. Then came the lovely vision of the fairies' glen—the love at first sight of the beautiful stranger—the arrest at midnight—the dungeon—the escape—and now these torturing doubts of the fidelity of one for whom he would have poured out his life-blood "as freely as flask gives its wine." If her treachery were confirmed, he thought, no matter what became of him. He would surrender himself to the duke, and lay his head upon the block without a murmur. These reflections were interrupted by the tinkling of the silver bell that summoned him to the adjoining apartment. He sprang up, rushed through the doorway by which the page vanished, and then stood transfixed at the spectacle which presented itself to his eye.

He stood within a small apartment, fitted up with the utmost

luxury, but with peculiar taste. It was draped throughout with hangings of rich blue Genoa velvet, heavily fringed with gold bullion, and gathered in the centre of the ceiling, from which it descended in rich and graceful folds, forming a tent. The floor was piled with Turkey carpets, so that a footstep awakened no echo. In the centre was a magnificent divan, and near it, standing on the floor, a vast alabaster lamp, fed with perfumed oil, diffused light and fragrance through the apartment.

Reclining on the divan in the centre of the room, was a lady of surpassing loveliness. On her head she wore a turban of emerald green silk, encircled by a bandeau of precious stones, which held up a veil of gold tissue that fell like a cloud around her. A short, rose-coloured tunic of satin, covered with fanciful gold embroidery, in the flowers of which sparkled diamonds and rubies, descended just below the knee, where it disclosed full trowsers of blue satin, gathered at the bottom by gold anklets set with precious stones, while the little fairy blue-veined feet just rested in slippers that Cinderella might have worn. Resting carelessly upon her elbow, the right hand of the lady, sparkling with jewelled rings, played with the flexible tube of a nargillah, or Turkish pipe, the bowl of which, curiously carved and ornamented, was set in a crystal vase that stood upon a mat at the foot of the divan. The dark eyes of the lady gazed piercingly upon the prince, as if to estimate the effect of this display. For a few moments Giulio was speechless. At last he spoke.

"Lady," he said, "I feel that I am an intruder here. I came hither in quest of another than yourself, and it appears that I have been misled by a mischievous page."

"The page is gone," said the lady, with a slight smile, and in the most melodious of voices. "His mission is accomplished—he will never appear upon the stage of life again; but in the place of Selim the page, can you not accept Zelie the Persian maiden, equally devoted to your service?"

The eyes of the prince had now become accustomed to the light. Scrutinizing the features of the personage before him, and coupling the result of that scrutiny with the reply of the female, his mind was instantly enlightened.

"You, then, beautiful girl, were the page of the princess?" he said.

"No other, prince. But name not the princess; she is unworthy your mention."

"And what could have induced you, Zelie—since so I must name you—to lay aside the garments of your sex, and accept a

menial occupation—you, whose beauty should command service rather than accord it?"

"It was to serve my father."

"Your father!"

"Sit down, prince, and you shall hear my story."

Giulio, strangely fascinated, accepted the invitation, or, rather, obeyed the command—for it was uttered with the tone of one used to secure obedience, and took a seat on the divan beside Zelie.

"I first saw light," said Zelie, "in that far Eastern clime whose flowers and trees, and groves and birds and fountains tell us what Paradise must have been in the first dawn of creation. I never knew my mother, for she died at my birth, but my father lavished on me more than a mother's tenderness. He was learned in all the lore of the East. His life had been passed in reading the profoundest secrets of nature; the story of the stars, the mysteries of earth. But it was not for the sake of that knowledge alone that he gathered the traditions of the Eastern magi, that he pored over the Egyptian scrolls, that he lingered long years on the banks of the Ganges and the Nile. His is a twofold dream of wealth and empire. Gold for himself—gold for me—a gorgeous Eastern home for both. Such were his aims. In pursuit of this wealth, unsatisfied with the hoards he had already amassed, he came to the West, and circumstances induced him to visit Parma. As a professed astrologer, he had need to gather by a sure and unsuspected hand, a knowledge of all that was passing in the world he seemed to disdain, and yet which it was necessary he should become thoroughly acquainted with. Hence his daughter became his instrument, and appeared at the court as a boy engaged for the service of the princess. A heavy bribe procured from the architect who had been employed in the repairs of the palace, a thorough knowledge of all the secret chambers, passages, and modes of communication with which these Italian structures abound; and we know far more of these material mysteries than the duke himself. How we avail ourselves of these secrets, you yourself have partially witnessed. Suffice it to say, that my father's purpose has been accomplished. He is master of untold wealth. The duke, in view of approaching dangers, has given him permission to remove with his treasure to a place of safety. I need not tell you that we shall never return. Our faces are turned to the East, the cradle of our race, the home of fiery hearts and gorgeous dreams, and all the felicity that earth can bestow. I have nearly told my story, but not quite."

Zelie paused, and appeared agitated, as if expecting that the prince would speak, but as he remained silent, she resumed :

"Do you recognize this ring?" she asked, offering her hand to Giulio.

The prince bent down, and without touching the fair hand, replied that he recognized the trinket as that he had bestowed on her in the dungeon

"The gift bestowed upon the boy was treasured by the woman," said the strange girl.

Still Giulio was silent.

"Could you think that it was a boy's devotion that prompted me to brave danger and fatigue for your sake?" asked Zelie, appealingly.

"Whatever the motive, lady," replied the prince, "I shall always be deeply grateful for the service."

"That service was rendered because I loved you, prince," exclaimed Zelie. "That ring was treasured that I might have the right to say to you one day as I say to you now—in your darkest hour there was but one to serve you, and now she claims your love as her recompense."

"You forget there was another," said Giulio. "The princess."

"The princess!" exclaimed Zelie, angrily. "She served you in her father's interest. She knew full well that your imprisonment was more dangerous to him than your liberty. Policy spoke to her false Italian heart, and she obeyed it."

"I am convinced you are wrong," said Giulio.

"Do I wrong her when I bid you compare her loveliness with mine?" cried Zelie, with flashing eyes. "When I boldly challenge the comparison?"

"Zelie!" exclaimed the prince, "in this brief interview a sudden light has broken upon me. I came hither doubting the lady of my love; I leave you, aware of the motive that has induced you to traduce her, and sorrowful that one so gifted, to whom I owe such gratitude, should stoop to arts so unworthy."

"Ferrado Montaldo loves the princess," said Zelie, starting up wildly. "He loves her—they will be wedded."

"I believe it not," said Giulio, firmly. "Farewell!"

"You leave me not," said Zelie, as the prince moved towards the door. "That way lies danger—death! Here, with us, life and happiness—all is arranged for our flight. Go with us. You will be happy. I will be your bride, your slave. You shall tear off those tattered garments and wear the turban of the Moslem. You shall renounce your false religion, and kneel with us at the shrine of the prophet."

She seized the arm of the prince, and clung to it with tenacity. "Come, come to my father," she gasped. "He will bless our loves."

"Temptress, avaunt!" cried Giulio, shaking off her grasp. "Were the Princess Margarita lost to me, you could not be mine. Between me and thee there lies a gulf—profound—impassable!"

With a wild cry, that seemed the agony of a breaking heart, Zelie relinquished her hold upon the prince's arm, and reeling backward as if death-stricken, fell upon the divan. Giulio dashed through the door, plunged down the dark, stone stairway, and a fortunate chance guiding his hand, touched the spring of the secret panel, and had the satisfaction of seeing it fly back.

CHAPTER XVII.

MUTUAL EXPLANATIONS.

THE Princess Margarita uttered a cry of astonishment and pain when she beheld Giulio, pale with excitement, suddenly appear before her. She sprang towards him, and clasped his hand in both of hers.

"How is this, Giulio? Whence come you? How is it that you are here in the heart of danger again? Was my protection of no avail? Has the signet-ring lost its power?"

"I should never have left these walls," answered Giulio. "Of what avail to liberate my body, while my heart remained prisoner? Yet I come not back as I went forth, princess. You have a right to scorn me now. I have fought Montaldo, and been foiled."

"Fought Montaldo? Surely, Giulio, you are mad. He is your best friend, and should be dear to you as a brother; for he loves your sister."

"He love Estella!"

"Yes; this morning he confessed it."

"And she?"

"Confided to him that she loved him in return. He went from her presence, promising to spare you should he cross your path in the assault."

"He did spare me," said Giulio. "I encountered him this morning, challenged him, struck him, though he was sheathed in

steel, and compelled him to defend himself. He might have slain me, but he scorned to take advantage of my rashness."

"But the motive for assaulting him?"

"The belief that he was to receive your hand as the guerdon of his service to your father."

"And did you think for one moment, Giulio," said the princess, reproachfully, "that I could prove false to my plighted troth? Ah! how weak is the trust of man, compared to that of woman."

"Margarita," said the prince, "jealousy is the surest test of love. There were other circumstances that combined to shake my reason—for it was a mental aberration—for a moment. Your page—your page who had already saved my life, who had no apparent motive for deception, who had given the highest proof of his attachment to me—he, I say, swore to me that he knew you were lost to me, and plighted to another."

"The false traducer knew better. Strange that so young a boy's heart should be so full of evil."

"I have a stranger tale yet for your ear," said the prince. "That page is not what he seems."

"A spy?"

"Yes; a spy upon all your actions. But, Margarita, the worst remains to be told. Your page, that was a boy, as it seemed—is a woman."

"A woman?"

"Ay, a woman—beautiful, passionate, vengeful, unprincipled. Moreover, she is the enemy of our faith, a follower of the false prophet of Islam."

"Selim!" exclaimed the princess.

"Selim no more, but Zelie, daughter of the duke's astrologer."

"Giulio, you have furnished me with the key to a dark mystery. This woman, who traduced me to you, sought to shake my confidence in you. An unknown female came to my chamber in the night-time."

"She and her father know a hundred secret passages by which they can pass from one part of the palace to another unseen and unsuspected."

"This mysterious female presented herself as your affianced bride," pursued the princess. "In proof of which she showed me a ring which you had worn on your finger."

"It was the same which I bestowed upon the page in my dungeon, at his or her request. Thus, then, the clouds which threatened to darken our happiness are swept away."

"No, Giulio, they were never darker," said the princess, tears

filling her eyes. "For my sake you have rushed back into the heart of danger. Escape is no longer possible. The duke has given orders that none leave these walls without his permission. The signet-ring is no longer a talisman, and I, alas! have lost the power to protect you."

Tears filled her eyes, and her lips quivered as she made this acknowledgment.

"No matter," said Giulio. "Your father can do his worst. I will no longer fly from his wrath. Let him destroy me if he dare. I will no longer owe my safety to a woman's protection. I will go to the duke and surrender myself to him, and let him work his pleasure on this poor frame. He may send me to the block, and if Heaven designs that I shall perish, the light of love will gild my last moments like a parting sunbeam."

"You shall not throw away your life," said the princess. "If my words are unavailing, there is another advocate who shall plead with me for my cause."

She threw open the door from another room, and Estella rushed into her brother's arms.

"Dear Estella," said the prince, as he folded her to his heart. "I thank Heaven for this moment's meeting. It may be our last, sweetest; but we shall not part without my blessing on your fair young head. Mourn not for me when I am gone Montaldo shall teach you to forget your grief, and you will think only of your brother as one who, after a few painful trials, passed to a better world."

"What is the meaning of these sad words, dear brother?" asked the weeping girl.

"It means that, unless you can dissuade him, your brother will surrender himself to the duke, to be dealt with as he pleases. My father is now an angry and a desperate man."

"Giulio!" exclaimed Estella, "brother, dear brother, you have no right to peril your life. Your life, did I say? Are not our lives linked indissolubly with yours? Do nothing rash. Be counselled by the princess. She has wisdom and power."

"Estella—Margarita," said the prince, "you have vanquished my scruples. I place myself in your hands, well knowing that neither of you will counsel my dishonour."

"I thank you for your generous confidence, Giulio," said the princess. "You know well that your honour is as dear to me as your life. Hear me. I must conceal you for the present. Not here—the place is too insecure—but in the very last place where you will be looked for—in the prison from which you escaped. I myself will be your jailer. Matteo, besotted with wine, now

sleeps as if he were dead. The prison, beneath my control, will be a sure fortress, and ere harm can come to you, I will devise some means to conjure away every danger. What think you of my plan?"

"I will not allow myself to think," said the prince. "I place my fate in your hands. You are wiser, better, and truer than I am. When an angel interests herself in the fate of a mortal, the issue cannot but be fortunate."

With one more embrace bestowed upon his sister, Giulio abandoned himself to the guidance of the princess, who led the way from the palace to the prison. They found Matteo slumbering heavily upon his accustomed bench near the portal, and the princess easily possessed herself of the keys. She then resumed her way along a far-reaching corridor, followed by the prince, and paused before a cell long unoccupied.

"I will not place you in your former apartment," said she, "for I alone must know where to find you. There are duplicate keys to this cell. One I will keep myself—take thou the other; and if, before the day has closed, I do not come to liberate you, then you will know that the worst has chanced, and that the means of escape are in your own hands. Farewell—be of good cheer. Heaven will not desert us in our need."

With one embrace they parted. The prince entered the cell, and Margarita, after turning the key, withdrew it, and hurrying back along the corridor, replaced the bunch from which she had abstracted the two keys beside the sleeping jailer. This done, she returned to her apartments with all possible speed.

She had scarcely reached it and exchanged a few words with Estella, when Zelie presented herself in her page's dress. She was pale as death, with dark circles under her eyes, but her manner was as self-possessed as ever. She announced that the duke commanded the instant presence of his daughter.

Margarita found her father in his audience chamber. He motioned her to a seat, and addressed her in a cold and determined tone.

"Margarita," said he, "we have reached a crisis in the affairs of our state. Whatever we do must be done briefly. This morning you wed Montaldo."

"Yes, father," said the princess, faintly.

"I could have wished," said the duke, "for a brilliant scene at your espousals; but fate has ordered otherwise. In our private chapel the altar is already decorated—a priest is in waiting to perform the nuptial ceremony. I have summoned Montaldo from the wall to receive your hand at mine."

"Father," faltered Margarita, "this precipitation—"

"The affair admits of no discussion or delay. You have heard my will. No maiden scruples."

"I cannot wed Montaldo."

"Not to-day!"

"Never!"

"How is this?" cried the duke, the flush of rising passion colouring his pallid cheek.

"For the best of reasons, I cannot wed him," answered Margarita, firmly.

"Name it."

"I love another."

"Another! And his name?"

"That is my secret, father."

"I shall know how to extort it."

"And Montaldo, father, he too loves another. But why should I seek to evade the truth? Delays, prevarications, mysteries are indeed of no avail. He I love is the Prince Giulio."

"He can never be yours," said the duke, shuddering as he spoke.

"And why not, father? Why should not our feud be healed by my union with the rightful heir of Parma?"

"Death has already forbidden the banns."

"Death!" exclaimed the princess, with well-feigned horror.

"I cannot conceal it from you longer, Margarita," said the duke, placing his kerchief to his eyes, "but last night your cousin died in his prison house."

"Giulio dead?"

"This morning his body was delivered to the Duke of Milan."

"Alas! alas!" cried the princess, wringing her hands.

"Thus should end my cares and troubles," said the duke. "But," he added, gnashing his teeth, "Milan accuses me of foul play, and yet threatens to storm the city. Montaldo is, I fear me, wavering; and there is no other to whom I could entrust the command of the troops. Your hand would secure him."

"This morning," said the princess, "he avowed to me his love for Estella."

"Then Estella must no longer be an obstacle," said the duke.

"What have I said?" exclaimed the princess. "Father, you cannot mean harm to that young girl."

The reply of the duke was prevented by the entrance of a messenger, who announced an ambassador from the Duke of Milan.

"Admit him instantly," said the duke.

And then he summoned his attendants as witnesses, and the presence chamber was soon filled with a numerous retinue.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MESSAGE OF MILAN.

When all were assembled and ranged in the order befitting the reception of an ambassador, the draperies were withdrawn from the great door at the lower end of the hall, opposite the ducal throne, and, preceded by the flourishing of trumpets, there entered a knight armed from head to heel in a brilliant suit. A cloud of snowy plumage tossed and danced upon his crest, he held a truncheon in his mailed grasp, and the rowels of his golden spurs rang on the marble pavement as he moved slowly, pausing every few seconds, up the hall. As his helmet was closed, much curiosity was felt by the courtiers as to his identity, a curiosity heightened by the straining gaze which the duke himself fixed upon the approaching figure. In fact, it was noticed that the countenance of the duke was ashen pale, and that he was singularly agitated.

In the same strange manner—three steps and then a halt—the figure continued to advance, until the duke, by stretching out his hand, could have touched the truncheon of the messenger, when the stranger suddenly sank down in a heap at the foot of the throne.

"Most mighty prince," said an indistinct voice from the interior of the helmet, "bid an armorer or any one who hath sufficient skill, to undo my helmet and give me air, and relieve me from a portion of this weight of steel and iron."

At a sign from the duke, several helping hands accomplished the wish of the stranger, who was relieved of his helmet and placed upon his feet. With profound astonishment, the duke, who had recognised the armour, now beheld the features of Tonio the jester.

"Answer me truly, thou knave," said the duke, sternly, "how camest thou by that armour?"

"Marry, your exemplary mightiness, I dreamed myself into it." replied the jester.

"How, sirrah?"

"Will your tremendous transparency permit me to explain?" said the jester. "Yesternight, if your august eminence remembers, your magnanimous clemency consigned the gentleman who now addresses you to the care of a very unpleasant individual, who has the honour of officiating as your head jailer."

"Go on, sirrah! but I warn you to be brief," said the duke.

"Mighty potentate, I will be brief," and he gabbled on as fast as his tongue could move; "breakfast with the jailer—chicken, wine, sleepy, sound nap, wake up in a coffin dressed in armour in the camp of the Milanese. Duke of Milan wanted to hang me because somebody had cheated somebody, somehow or other; that's all."

"And you came back, like a fool, into the lion's den," said the duke, the angry flush occasioned by the narrative, yet burning on his cheek.

"Pardon me, your gracious grace," said the jester, "though no one can admire more than I do the eminent individual whom I have the honour to address, still it seems to my poor judgment, that your tremendous majesty is best admired at a distance. Vesuvius is a very beautiful spectacle seen from afar during an eruption, but the wise man was no better than a fool who watched it from the brink of the crater and was burned alive for his pains."

"Then tell me, in the fiend's name, how came you here?" said the duke, losing all patience.

"I came, your grace, because I couldn't help it," answered the poor jester. "His tremendous highness of Milan is just as imperious as your extraordinary majesty. I was between two fires. My own wish said stay; his grace of Milan said 'go,' and his grace's orders were more powerful than my wishes. Yet, to do him justice, and to correct the unfavourable impression I have rather hastily given of him, I ought to remark that nothing could possibly be handsomer than the delicate manner in which he insinuated his views. 'Tonio,' said he, 'I wish you to bear a message to Parma, but you can decline the mission if you dislike the honour, only, if you don't go, I shall hang you.' Of course, under the circumstances, I accepted."

"The message! the message!" said the duke, stamping his foot, impatiently.

"Your grace will hold me harmless for the words I am compelled to utter," said the jester, trembling violently.

"I have not heard them yet," said the duke evasively. "But if you do not instantly deliver the message, without suppressing a single word, in ten minutes your worthless carcass shall waver in the wind from our highest battlement."

With death thus staring him directly in the face, the jester no longer hesitated. Laying aside the bombastic and burlesque manner which had become, from long use, natural to him, he spoke as follows:

"His grace of Milan sends greeting to the Duke of Parma. The Duke of Parma, through an authorised agent, pledged himself this morning to surrender the person of Giulio Veroni, rightful heir to the throne of Parma, to his kinsman. Instead thereof, at the appointed time, the aforesaid agent, being an officer of rank in the household of the Duke of Parma, came with the intelligence that Giulio had died in prison, and in place of the living Giulio, gave up a coffin said to contain his remains, but which, on being opened, was found to contain a living man, the jester of the prince. This outrage on all decency—this deception—the added trickery and insult, should have put an end to all forbearance. It is not out of regard to the Duke of Parma that his grace of Milan holds back for a moment the vengeance due to conduct like this; but insomuch as he is willing to spare the effusion of innocent blood, he now declares that if, within one half hour from the reception of this message, Giulio Veroni, living and unharmed, shall be set at liberty and sent under an honourable escort to the court of Milan, then the Duke of Milan will be ready to agree upon an armistice and a conference to adjust the claims of Giulio. But if the said Giulio shall not be liberated and given up, then the order to assault the city shall be immediately given; no quarter will be shown the garrison when the city is taken, and Parma shall be given up to sack and pillage."

High swelled the wrath of the Duke of Parma. The princess sought to interpose a word, but her father commanded her to be silent, and rising, while his whole frame shook with passion, he dictated this reply to the messenger of Milan:

"Tell your master that the prince shall never be surrendered; that I spurn his proposition, and dare him to the assault. But say to him that the sister of the princess is also in my power, and that the moment his columns move to the assault, her body shall be flung from the ramparts and dashed to atoms at their base. Hence with all speed, and deliver this my message."

"If you harm a hair of the signora's head," said the jester, who was passionately devoted to her, "your life shall pay the forfeit."

"Away, vassal!" cried the duke, "and do thine errand."

The jester did not wait a second bidding, but retired from the hall, forgetting, in his indignation, the ceremonial etiquette of

backing out of the august presence. A dead silence followed his departure, during which an uneasy feeling reigned. The threats of the Duke of Milan were more dreaded at that moment than the anger of the ruler of Parma. The latter, after his passion had subsided, also became a prey to vague fears of the result. Yet he concealed his agitation, as well he might, from the prying eyes of his courtiers. Beckoning the page to him, he whispered an order. A sinister smile wreathed the lips of Zelie, as, glancing malignantly at the princess, she retired to obey the order. After a very minutes of painful and breathless suspense, Zelie reappeared, conducting the Lady Estella.

The duke beckoned an officer of the guard towards him.

"Take this lady," he said, "to the ramparts where Ferrado holds watch and ward. Deliver her into his hands, and tell him to treat her for the present with all courtesy and respect; but, should Milan dare to loose an arrow flight against the walls, or advance a column to the assault, tell him to fling her from the battlements at the foot of the advancing enemy. He has been warned of the consequences; he shall see we can keep our word."

Such savage commands and deeds were then not unusual in warfare, and the soldier accordingly accepted his mission as readily as an officer of our day would undertake to repel an advance by a battery. But while Estella clasped her hands in speechless agony, the princess rushed forward, and threw herself at her father's feet, and clasped his knees.

"Father," said she, "you will not do this wrong; you will not make a guileless girl the victim of your hate and fear. I conjure you to remember your honour in this crisis."

"Rise, girl," said the prince, with a frown. "Respect your own rank, if you have no respect for mine. Think you the Duke of Milan will spare age or sex should his ruffians carry the defences and enter the city? Neither will I spare any attempt to check him. Your prayers are in vain. Retire to your apartment, and leave affairs of state to those who understand them."

"Father, a word from me might arrest the threatened danger. Were the Prince Giulio here—"

"He should die the death of a traitor by the quick edge of the axe," said the duke, furiously. "You shall see how I will deal with him."

The princess rose to her feet, and shrank with horror from the side of her evil parent. Folding Estella in her arms, she whispered:

"Fear nothing, Montaldo is a noble nature. He will not harm

you for worlds. Blinded by passion, the duke forgets to whom he is committing you."

Estella warmly returned the embrace of her friend, and committed herself to the kind care of Providence, and while she was being led away by her attendants, the princess retired to her apartments to meditate upon the best course to be pursued in the existing circumstances.

CHAPTER XIX.

FERRADO AND ESTELLA.

Estella, conducted by the officer to whose charge she had been committed, now followed his guidance down the winding stairs of the palace out into the courtyard. Here, in a few moments, a hand-litter was prepared for her, into which she was courteously handed. A few guards then surrounded the conveyance, and the little procession set forward. Arrived at the foot of the walls, the litter halted and she was assisted to alight, and the duke's officer led her through a narrow doorway and up a staircase constructed in the thickness of the wall, from the top of which they emerged upon the broad rampart. Montaldo, apprised of an order from the duke, advanced to receive the messenger.

"I am ordered to commit to your safe keeping, signor commandant," said the officer, speaking in a low tone, "the person of this lady—the sister of the Prince Giulio. The duke commands you to treat her with all courtesy; but, the moment a demonstration is made against the city, to fling her from the battlements at the feet of the invader."

Ferrado had great difficulty to command his emotions, so as to frame a suitable reply. At last he said:

"I thank my noble master for the confidence he reposes in me. Go back to the duke, and tell him that Ferrado Montaldo will comport himself like a soldier and a gentleman of honour."

The officer bowed low and retired. Estella and Montaldo stood alone upon the rampart.

"Lady," said Ferrado, "I little thought we should meet so soon again, and in this—of all places."

"And under such circumstances," said Estella.

"You are aware of the orders I have received from the duke?" said Montaldo, coldly.

"He was so cruel as to give them in my hearing," replied Estella, shuddering.

"As a soldier, holding a high commission from the duke, with all the consideration and emoluments appertaining to the rank," said Ferrado, "I have no choice but blind obedience to his commands. As such, were he to command me to slay my own father I should be compelled to obey him. Such is military loyalty in a despotic state."

"But the princess told me that I could confide in you," said Estella, shuddering at the cold, inflexible tone of the commander; "that you would not betray me."

"Can I betray my prince?"

Estella was silent.

"Come hither, maiden," said Montaldo. "Give me thy hand. Nay, shrink not—the hour of sacrifice has not yet arrived. Now come with me."

Estella placed her trembling hand in the mailed glove of her late lover—now her executioner, and submitted to his guidance. He led her to the edge of the wall, and holding her hand firmly, bade her look downward. The wall rose perpendicularly fifty feet from the edge of the moat, at the brink of which lay a pile of jagged rocks.

"Light as your person is," said Montaldo, "do you not think it would fall heavily upon those cruel rocks?"

"It is death to think of it," said the shuddering girl.

"Come away then, quickly," said Montaldo. "There is a strange wild fascination in gazing from these dizzy, unfenced heights. The tempter is close at hand at such times, whispering in the ear of mortals, as reason reels upon her throne, that it is glorious to plunge into the abyss. Methinks it were the best ending of our trials, clasped in a fond embrace to spring into the yawning gulf."

"Come away, Montaldo!" said Estella, shuddering at the wild fancy of her companion.

They had been seen by the army of Milan, which had advanced close to the walls, and the duke had recognised the white dress of the lady. A fierce shout of angry menace rose from the ranks.

"We are observed," said Montaldo, calmly. "Let us retire behind this turret."

When they were screened from the observation of the enemy, the feelings which Montaldo had struggled to repress, burst forth.

He seized the hands of Estella, pressed them convulsively to his lips, and covered them with kisses.

"Did you think for a moment, dearest," he exclaimed, "that I could harm a hair of your head? Did you think that I could behold those delicate limbs dashed to atoms on the ruthless rocks—that I could murder my own love, and slay my own heart? Estella! Estella! my own love—you are safe and free. We must part—but remember that your Ferrado loves you better than life and liberty—and that he surrendered both to secure them both to you."

"What mean you, Ferrado?" asked the lady, as she caressed his steel gauntlet with her dainty fingers.

"No matter—question me not. Your life—my honour are safe. But time presses; the duke may find other hirelings less scrupulous than myself. Bide here but a moment, and I will rejoin you."

Estella was indeed left alone but a very few moments. Ferrado soon rejoined her, and conducted her to the foot of the wall, where a saddle-horse awaited her, upon which he seated her tenderly and carefully. Then, mounting his own horse at her side, and accompanied by a trumpeter and half a dozen cavaliers, he led the way to the gate already open, across the sounding drawbridge, and directly towards the enemy's lines. The presence of a lady of course showed the pacific character of the party, and as they advanced, the Duke of Milan himself rode forth to meet them. Ferrado saluted the duke, and his salutation was answered by cold courtesy.

"My lord," said Ferrado, "I surrender to your grace's charge, the Lady Estella, sister of Prince Giulio."

"Ha! this is well!" said the duke. "Parma is coming to his senses. I thought he dared not execute his menaces. But Prince Giulio?"

"I have nothing further to communicate," said Ferrado, coldly.

"Then prepare for the assault," said the duke.

"We are ready to meet it," answered Ferrado.

Dismounting from his charger, he lifted Estella from her saddle, and breathed in her ear a passionate farewell. Springing on his horse again, and saluting the duke, he wheeled his charger, and with his party rode back into the city. Dismissing his men to their several posts, he then dashed his rowels into his horse's flanks and rode furiously to the ducal palace, where, flinging his rein to a groom and bounding to the ground, he pushed through the astonished guards and attendants, and rushed into the presence of the duke.

"What news, Ferrado?" asked the duke, startled by his sudden appearance.

"Nothing new has chanced—but the Duke of Milan has ordered the assault."

"Ha! then you know the first step of revenge. The Lady Estella is in your hands."

"You are mistaken," said Montaldo, frowning.

"How!" cried the duke, alarmed, "where is she?"

"In the camp of Milan—safe from harm, thank Heaven!"

"You mean not what you say," cried the duke, springing to his feet.

"This moment I surrendered her to the safe keeping of the Duke of Milan. And now, Duke of Parma, hear me. I am no longer soldier of yours. Take back the commission you bestowed on me—I will not have it. This sword I thought would carve out honour for me—there it lies!" and he flung the weapon at the feet of the duke. "Here are the spurs of knighthood you bestowed on me." He tore them from his heels and spurned them from him. "There is my casque," he said, flinging down his plumed helmet on the floor. "Now do with me what you will. Chains—death—are better than your service."

"Traitor!" cried the duke.

"Thou art the traitor!" retorted Ferrado. "Traitor to the laws of honour—traitor to the laws of blood. To preserve your miserable life and wretched state, you would shed the same blood that flows in your own veins, diluted, turned to venom though it be, in the transmission."

"I will hear no more," cried the duke. "Guards! advance and seize the prisoner."

"I thank your grace," said Ferrado. "This—this is truly honour. Disgrace and imprisonment at this court are proofs of honesty and merit. But look well to the walls, my liege—send some one to supply my place—time presses. As gallant a leader and as brave an army as ever rushed to the assault of citadel, are at this moment sweeping forward. Their cry is "Giulio or vengeance!"

"You shall not live to witness their triumph."

"I care not for life. It is enough that I know you cannot escape punishment."

With these words of defiance on his lips, Ferrado, in the grasp of the guards, was dragged away to the prison.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DUKE OF PARMA ON THE ALERT.

To replace Ferrado, the duke detailed another officer of rank, by name Antonio Ferretti, who was ordered to take charge of the troops, and to answer for their holding out to the last at the peril of his head. This duty performed, the duke dismissed his court, reserving a small personal guard. Having given some instructions to these men, he led them by a passage, formerly spoken of, to the vicinity of the astrologer's apartment, where they were silently halted, while he alone entered.

The astrologer rose calmly to receive his illustrious visitor. The duke, on the other hand, assumed a cheerful, confident air, which was far from representing the poignant anxiety and the racking doubts of his guilty heart.

When they were both seated—for Magnus had permission to seat himself in the ducal presence—his grace opened the conversation.

"Well, Magnus, hast thou merited my bounty by scanning the aspect of my fortunes lately—and how do they appear to you?"

"Bright, radiant, glorious, my lord," replied the astrologer.

"No clouds to obscure them?" asked the duke, carelessly.

"Specks, flaws, but no clouds," replied the astrologer, in a tone of confidence.

"That is well," said the duke, smiling. "I have to thank you for the speedy effect of your poison on Giulio. He is dead."

"No need to inform me of aught, my lord, save for the sake of comment," said the astrologer, "for in my magic mirror I read all that has passed, all that passes, and all that will come to pass."

As he spoke, he carelessly touched a small hand-mirror that lay on the table.

"May I not look upon it," said the duke.

"Surely," replied the astrologer. "Yet to your unlearned eye, it will only give back the image of your own countenance. Second-sight is an especial gift of Heaven."

"Well, then, venerable sage, cast thine eyes upon the wonderful plate, and tell me what thou seest therein. I would know the position of Ferrado Montaldo at this moment."

The astrologer gazed intently on the mirror.

"There are clouds here," he muttered. "Now they open like drapery folded back from a picture. I see a line of wall, a proud banner displayed, a warrior on the rampart marshalling his troops

—I recognize the face—it is Ferrado Montaldo. He is at his post, your grace."

"It is well," said the duke, smothering his rising passion. "Now look again, and tell me where is the Lady Estella."

"I see," said the astrologer, consulting his mirror again, "I see the interior of the princess's apartment. Estella is seated there beside her."

"Wonderful magician!" cried the duke. "Methinks, inspired by your presence, I too am gifted with this wonderful vision and with a prophetic spirit. Give me the mirror!" He took it in his hand and gazed on its polished surface intently. Then starting back: "What do I behold? Another holds the place of Ferrado on the outer wall; I see Montaldo in a dungeon—the Lady Estella free!"

"My lord," said the astrologer, with a trembling voice, "the evil spirits are deceiving thee."

"The evil spirit that has deceived me is before me!" exclaimed the duke, springing to his feet, and dashing the mirror to atoms on the floor. "Lo, as I crush these atoms under foot, so do I spurn thy trickeries, thou false, unblushing knave. Too long have you ruled my spirit unquestioned and undoubted. You promised me good fortune, and the dark hour is upon me. You counselled me to evil, and pretended to aid me, yet all the schemes I have undertaken at your bidding have failed—and I have become poor, while my wealth has flowed into your coffers. I have now detected you, and you shall pay the penalty of your long imposture. Soldiers! arrest this man."

At the duke's call, the guard without rushed in and advanced upon the charlatan.

"Back, knaves!" said the astrologer, rising to his loftiest height, and extending his arm. "Touch me at your peril. At a word of mine, an earthquake would shake this tower to its foundations, and bury you all in its ruins For me, I am invulnerable. The mortal hand that seeks to grasp me will be palsied, and mortal weapons are powerless against my charmed life."

The cunning astrologer reckoned on the superstitious character of the persons he addressed. They had advanced without hesitation at the bidding of their master, but they now shrank back as if a blighting spell were upon them, and whispered moodily among themselves.

"Am I to be obeyed or not?" cried the duke, stamping his feet.

"Against mortal foe we would not hesitate," said one of the men, a German, crossing himself. "But we cannot war against fiends in human shape."

"Fools! cowards!" cried the duke, foaming with passion. "I will show you that he is mortal like yourselves."

And with these words he unsheathed his sword; but as he levelled its point at the breast of the astrologer, and drew back his arm to give full force to his meditated stroke, a figure rushed swiftly between him and his intended victim. It was the astrologer's daughter.

"Selim!" cried the duke—for she still wore her page's dress—"what mean you?"

"To protect my father's life, even at the hazard of my own. Fear nothing, dear father. Even the Duke of Parma dare not strike thee through a woman's heart."

"A woman!" said the duke, lowering his weapon. After a moment's pause, he added: "You are both my prisoners. Are you armed?"

Zelie contemptuously tossed a poniard at the feet of the duke.

"Had I arrived too late," she said, "I would have buried that weapon to the hilt in your false heart."

The duke shuddered as he looked back at the danger from which he had escaped.

"Guard the prisoners!" were his orders to the soldiers, who no longer hesitated to close round them, "and follow me."

He then led the way down the staircase and into the prison, Zelie clinging convulsively to the arm of her father, whose head was bowed upon his breast in the most abject dejection.

At the entrance of the prison, Matteo, the jailer, lay coiled up like a huge snake on his bench, but sprang to his feet at the duke's summons, and admitted the train.

"More traitors for your safe keeping, faithful Matteo," said the duke, with an affable smile.

The brutal jailer grinned as he surveyed the persons designated.

"A detected charlatan and his daughter," said the duke.

"I have but one favour to solicit," said the astrologer. "Let us be confined in one cell."

"So be it," said the duke. "Lead on, Matteo."

The jailer led the way to a cell, into which Magnus and his daughter were thrust, and the door locked upon them.

"Now," said the duke, "answer me one question, and fear not to reply. Where is Prince Giulio?"

"My lord, he has escaped."

"And you did not inform me of it!"

"My lord!" cried the jailer, falling on his knees, "he was set at liberty by your grace's daughter. How could I refuse obedience to her commands, when you have ever told me that she

bore equal sway with yourself, and when she showed your grace's signet-ring?"

"Rise, my good fellow, rise!" said the duke. "Perhaps it is as well that the prince is free. We will waste no more words upon the matter. But, my good Matteo, I have another prisoner for you. This villain was a man I trusted, and he betrayed my confidence. I am determined to make a signal example of him; and I would hold him securely till the hour of execution comes."

"Another execution!" said the jailer, rubbing his hands exultingly; "and will your grace permit me to act as executioner?"

"That can hardly be, my friend," said the duke, smiling. "I have arranged that office for another."

"As your grace pleases," said the jailer, with a change of countenance.

"Now, my good fellow, though I have no fear that you will suffer another prisoner to escape, for I have revoked all the authority ever committed to my daughter, still I wish to know that this wretch is confined in the very strongest dungeon."

"I will show your grace one that is secure as the grave," answered the jailer, "if you will follow me."

The duke motioned him to proceed, and still attended by his guard, advanced along the corridor, till the guide halted at a massive door, and unlocked and opened it. The duke looked in, and saw a narrow cell with a single barred window.

"Are you sure those bars are strong—that they are not rusted?"

"Ay, my lord. I have examined them but lately."

"Let me see you try their strength again," said the duke. "Leave your keys with me."

The jailer handed him the keys, while he went into the cell to show the duke how solid were the bars. When he had reached the further part of the dungeon, the duke closed the door upon him and locked it.

"One traitor is secured," he said, exultingly.

Then he handed the key to one of the soldiers—the same man who had spoken for his comrades in the astrologer's apartment.

"Carlo," said he, "I make you jailer in place of that false villain, with princely pay, if you serve me well—instant death if you falter in your task. My eye will be upon you. Admit no one to the prisoners except on an order from my lips. They are all conspiring against me," he muttered to himself, "but my courage rises with the emergency. The ducal coronet is a prize worth fighting for—if I lose that, I lose all."

And, followed by his guards, he returned to the palace.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE STORM OF THE CITY—FINAL EVENTS.

We will now return to the camp of the Duke of Milan, who, it will be remembered, received the Lady Estella from the hands of Ferrado Montaldo. She was conducted to a tent hastily vacated and prepared for her reception, where the duke courteously bade her to repose until such time as she felt inclined to ride to Milan, as he said a rude camp was no place for even a day's sojourn of a delicate lady.

"Pardon me, my lord, the presence of these gallant men, all so full of courage and animated in a good cause—friends of my brother and myself, revives and animates my spirits. I love to hear the neighing of steeds, to see the lance-heads and cuirasses fling back the sunbeams—yes, even to mark that brazen-throated artillery, when I know the purpose of this warlike preparation. With your leave, good my lord, I will remain here, nearer to Montaldo and to Giulio."

"To Montaldo!" said the duke, meaningly, and fixing his keen eyes upon her. "Why to Montaldo? I distrust that man. I deem him a party to the juggle put upon me in the matter of the pretended surrender of your brother."

The colour mounted to the cheek of Estella, and her eye sparkled.

"You wrong him, my lord—you wrong him," she said. "Ferrado Montaldo is one of the noblest of men. He never knowingly deceived you. He was never a party to the schemes of that bad man, who, for our misfortune, is our relative."

And she hastened to relate all she knew to the advantage of Montaldo, not forgetting to enlarge upon his last generous act.

"Nay, I take back all I have said against him, fair cousin," said the Duke of Milan. "And if I meet him in the fray, for your sake, I will turn aside my weapon and seek some more ignoble foe—though I had promised myself to cross swords with Ferrado. But how fares it with your brother?"

"He is now within the city—although last night at liberty," answered Estella.

"At liberty! and came not to me, his kinsman!"

Estella told him all she knew respecting the motives of her brother's return.

"By heavens!" said the duke. "love is, after all, a temporary insanity. Instead of coming to me and entering the city in triumph with a brilliant army, he flies back, alone and unprotected—back into the wolf's den, because his heart is with his ladye-love, and he fears a rival. Out on it! But no time is to be lost. The hour for action is arrived. If you will not accept an escort

to Milan, fair cousin, at least you will withdraw to some distance from the scene of coming strife."

"No," said Estella, "I am a soldier's daughter, and with my happiness staked upon the issue of this conflict, I must be a witness of the fortunes of the day."

"And I will have a horse saddled for you," said the duke, "so that, should the tide set against us, or a sortie from the city sweep the plain, your flight will be secure. And now, dear Estella, farewell; I go to my devoir."

"May Heaven protect and give you victory, my noble kinsman!" said Estella, pressing his hand to her heart.

"Amen!" said the duke, and he passed out of the tent.

In another moment, the faithful Tonio was at the feet of his adored mistress, kissing the hem of her garment passionately, and making frantic demonstrations of delight.

"Rise, dear Tonio," said Estella. "I do not like to see you at my feet."

The jester rose with some reluctance.

"You will see the most gallant knights of Italy there, fair mistress," said he, "ere long—when you have got your rights and your uncle his due. Don't you think there's some mistake about his being your uncle?"

Estella shook her head.

"May we not suppose," said the jester, "that your real uncle in his infancy was stolen by gipsys and a beggar's brat slipped into the cradle in his place—you know all babies look alike? And may we not hope that just as our friend in Parma is elevated to a yet higher position than he occupies by a strand of hemp rove through a block, that the real and true uncle will turn up, properly marked for accidental recognition, so as to make things square and comfortable all round?"

"Such things occur in the lays of troubadours and the fables of the minnesingers," said the princess smiling, "but not in actual life. But, Tonio, why are you here in attendance on a lady, when you should be in arms, marching on the foe?"

"I am obeying orders," said the jester. "His grace of Milan believed that my valour was so pre-eminent that it would put him to shame. Jealousy, you see, my lady—but I say nothing further—for he is a very gentleman."

"But if I intercede with him—"

"Not for worlds, dear lady. To tell the truth, I never was cut out for a soldier. My business is cracking jests, not cracking heads—and I have too much brains to expose them to be knocked out. I assure you the hours I passed recently with an iron pot on my head, and an iron jacket on my back, were the most un-

comfortable of my life. No, no, my lady, my post is beside your dear self. For you I could fight to the death—but in a general melee my arm were nothing worth. But hark! there go the trumpets! Look out for yourself, old ogre of Parma—I beg your pardon—I forgot, my lady, that you had the honour of being the old ruffian's niece."

Meanwhile the duke had been marshalling his forces, and preparing to open his fire on the city. He advanced boldly close up to the walls, taking advantage of inequalities of ground to shelter his men from the shot of the rampart guns, while he protected the others, his light troops, from the archery of the Parmese crossbowmen by pushing forward huge, movable screens, rolled on wheels. When all his guns, and the artillery of those days, being in its infancy, was clumsy and inefficient compared to ours, were placed in battery, the trumpets sounded a defiant signal, and a furious fire was opened all along the line. This was answered from the walls of the city, but while the Milanese guns, skilfully pointed, tore at once open the crumbling ramparts of the city, those of the enemy, badly served, responded almost harmlessly. The efforts of the duke were directed chiefly against the principal entrance of the town. He had observed that the chains which held the portcullis were apparently weak and badly rusted, and on these a storm of shot was poured incessantly. At last one of them was broken, and as the severed links fell rattling down, a shout of triumph rose from the assaulting forces. The ponderous drawbridge, sustained now by only one chain, bent heavily by its own weight, vibrated and swung to the detonation of the artillery. The roar of the guns was now deafening; the assailants and defenders both increased their fire. High above the wrathful roar of battle were heard the clear, trumpet-tones of the Duke of Milan, encouraging his troops.

"Well done, my merry men all. Ply them hotly! One round more and the bridge falls!"

Encouraged by the presence and the words of their leader, the gunners toiled at their engines of destruction with redoubled ardour. In a few moments the second chain was severed and the ponderous bridge came thundering down amidst triumphant shouts of exultation. But the victory was not yet achieved. The huge oak gates of the city, studded and clamped with iron, were yet to be beaten down. Ere he could issue his orders, the impetuous troops had poured upon the drawbridge, but were shot down, almost to a man, by the deadly aim of the archers.

"Back! back!" shouted the duke, above the storm of battle. "To your guns again!"

The fragment of the gallant band that had advanced so rashly,

fell back and divided to the right and left, while a whole park of artillery, dragged forward to the head of the bridge, poured over it a deluge of fire. The gate yielded at last.

"Now then!" shouted the duke. "Forward with your axes."

A rush was made against the shattered remnants of the gate, and it came down by the fury of the assault.

"Room there!" shouted the duke, "and then close in and follow me!"

Spurring his wild war-horse over the bridge, the gallant duke was the first to enter the city, while rank after rank of his plumed host followed him like crested billows dashing into a cave. The defenders of the city fell back in dismay and disarray.

"Down with your arms!" shouted the duke, "we thirst for no man's life. Victory and not bloodshed is what we strive for."

Nearly all the soldiers of Parma embraced the offered mercy and threw down their arms. A few faithful mercenaries, chiefly German and Swiss, still held out, but they were overpowered by numbers, and cut down unsparingly. Onward swept the wave of victory. The din of contending arms almost ceased, and nothing was heard but the clattering of horses' hoofs and the exultant shouts of the victors. Sweeping past the palace, the duke rode straight to the prison, for he thought it best to protect the victims of the tyrant of Parma, lest in desperation at his downfall he avenged himself on these defenceless men.

Carlo, the new jailer, sullenly yielded up the keys to the duke as he dismounted from his horse at the outer gate of the prison, seeing that resistance was no longer possible.

"Tell where the Prince Giulio lies," said the duke.

"He is not in my custody," said the jailer.

"If you utter a single falsehood," said the duke, "you die."

"I have no motive in deceiving you," said the man. "I know that you are master now."

The duke turned back in disappointment.

"What prisoners were particularly committed to your care?"

"This morning, an old man—the duke's astrologer—and his boy."

"The astrologer!" exclaimed the Duke of Milan. "The very man to give me the information I seek. Conduct me to him."

The jailer led the way, and pointed out the apartment. The duke unlocked the door hastily and entered. Near the door two figures were lying on a rude bench, in a sleeping posture. Magnus, the astrologer, was reclining in an easy attitude against the wall, while one arm encircled his daughter, whose head was resting on his breast. The duke laid his hand on the shoulder of the astrologer, but, gazing in the faces of the supposed sleepers, started back in horror. They were both dead. A broken phial

at the feet of the old man would have told the story, though more explicit evidence of the manner of their death was not wanting. A small roll of parchment had fallen beside the phial. The duke picked it up and read as follows :

"We die by our own hands—father and daughter. He could not survive disgrace, penury, and detection; I who pen these lines could not live to see the prince wedded to another. Whoever thou art who readest this scroll, bear to Prince Giulio my last words; tell him that I died repentant—that I prayed my poor services to him might offset my treachery and misconduct. I belied the Princess Margarita—she alone is worthy of his love. The prince could never have been mine, for he is a Christian, and I die a true believer in the Prophet. Farewell! ZELIE."

"There is a mystery in this," said the duke, as he placed the scroll in his breast, "which the princess must explain to me. See that these bodies are not disturbed, jailer."

He left the prison, and went directly to the audience chamber of the Duke of Parma. The duke, ashen pale, deserted by his courtiers, was seated on his throne.

"Duke of Milan," he said, rising, "I am now in your power."

"Justice shall be done you," said the Duke of Milan, sternly.

At this moment the Princess Margarita rushed forward, and threw herself at the feet of the victor.

"Noble duke," said she, "be as generous as you are great. For my sake—for the sake of one who has never injured you, spare my father!"

"Upon one condition," said the Duke of Milan, raising her—"that he produce Prince Giulio alive and unharmed."

"That condition is my death sentence," said the usurper.

The princess retired for one moment, and re-appeared, leading Giulio by the hand. The prince rushed into the arms of his victorious kinsman.

"Generous, noble friend," said he, "I owe victory to you, as I do life and liberty to this peerless lady."

"You have saved your father's life," said the Duke of Milan, addressing Margarita. "Had a hair of his head been harmed, Veroni, your life should have paid the forfeit."

"But my liberty?" said the ex-duke of Parma, sullenly.

"The prince must answer you," said the Duke of Milan, "for he alone has here authority. Long live Giulio Veroni, Duke of Parma!"

The cry was taken up by all the soldiers present, and the arched hall rang with the acclaim.

"The coronet of Parma is yours," said the usurper, turning to the prince. "May it prove a lighter burthen to your brow than it was to mine. And now, duke, I await my sentence."

"I cannot forget," said Giulio, "that you are my father's brother, though you have striven to make me do so. You are free; I pardon you freely and fully."

"My presence shall not mar your triumph and your happiness," said the usurper. "Yet I thank you for your mercy. May you be happy with my daughter. For me, my career is nearly run; and I shall end it in the monastery at the foot of Monte Rosa."

This project, be it here remarked, the usurper carried into execution, and it is to be hoped that he died sincerely penitent. He soon retired from the presence of the victors, and was seen no more in the palace he had so long disgraced by his tyrannies.

We shall not attempt to describe the joy of the meeting between Estella, the faithful Tonio and Giulio; nor that of Estella and Montaldo; nor the public festivities that took place when Giulio was proclaimed duke; nor the weddings of Giulio and the princess, Estella and Ferrado. Suffice it to say, that these events, graced by the presence of the good Duke of Milan, heralded a long and brilliant period in the history of Parma.

The idle minions that hung about the court (leeches on the treasury, and incubi on the people) were dismissed. The ducal train was reduced, expenditures curtailed, in short, rigid economy was the leading principle of the new administration. The holders of sinecures stood aghast at the complete revolution which was effected in the palace. The hireling ruffians that composed the standing army of the late duke, were paid to the uttermost farthing and disbanded, uttering fearful threats of turning robbers and ravaging the environs of the city. But a splendid volunteer force, raised to purge the country of brigands, soon put to flight this unprincipled soldiery, and Giulio showed his people that it was possible to command the respect of his neighbours, and maintain peaceful relations with them, without resorting to the menace of a powerful armament.

Though the church protested against it, yet by command of Giulio the remains of Magnus and Zelie were committed to the grave with appropriate ceremonies, in the presence of the young duke himself. His generous heart did not deny a regret for the fate of the beautiful and strange being, who was such a mixture of good and evil—of impulse, passion, and resolve.

The wit of Tonio the jester, when he became court fool, improved in quality, and he was universally believed to be the happiest mortal in the duchy. Indeed, he was often heard to remark that the cap and bells were a lighter weight to carry than the Ducal Coronet.

DUNN AND WRIGHT, PRINTERS, WEST NILE STREET, GLASGOW.

THE

ROYAL HIGHWAYMAN

OR, THE

Knight of the Road

GLASGOW: CAMERON AND FERGUSON,
88 WEST NILE STREET.
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. THE ROYAL HIGHWAYMAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHAMPION'S GLOVE.

On the 22nd day of September, 1761, the young king George III. was solemnly crowned in Westminster Abbey, and banqueted in the old hall at Westminster, which had covered with its network of dingy rafters so many memorable events, in which the great, the little—the noble, the base—the mighty of heart and soul, and the most grovelling and vicious—had borne a part, and "strutted their hour upon the stage."

The hall was a blaze of decoration. Banners fluttered their silken folds in the air, heavy with perfumes; gorgeous candelabra were ready to make a new day with their hundreds of wax lights, as soon as the brief sunlight of the autumn season should pass away; diamonds flashed like little suns in all directions; the rich costumes of the officers of state; the quaint old dresses of officials occupying positions long since obsolete and forgotten, except to the exchequer; the throngs of military officers, the waving of feathers, the entanglements of spurs in hoops—ladies then affected the crinoline as now; the rustling—positively the rustling—of gold lace and embroidery, the clank and clangour of sword-hilts and sheaths, the subdued hum of conversation from so many fair and noble lips, the light laugh, the banquet, which presented a blaze of gold and jewelled cups, all combined to produce one of those indoor pageants—half barbarous, half magnificent—which no other country at that period could exhibit but old England.

It was a dim and lustreless day.

At a little past twelve o'clock, the sun, which had shed but a weak and watery radiance upon the ceremonial, finally retired behind a mass of slaty-coloured clouds.

But the royal banquet went forward right merrily, and the programme of the day's proceedings, part by part, was carried out.

The king had recently married Charlotte, daughter of the Duke of Mecklenburg; and this "plain young woman," as Monsieur Clevoillo described her, when writing to his court, sat at the right hand of the young king, and "looked stupid and weary."

The great officers of state said their say. There was abundance of lip-service, and courtly smiles, and backing out from the royal presence; and chamberlains grew red in the face with their exertions, and gold sticks in waiting, and silver sticks, solemn-looking clerks marshal, Rouge, and Croix, and Clarencieux, fretted and fumed, and were zealous, and affected great courtesy to each other, and the banquet, like a stage pageant, was performed.

But what means that fanfaronade of trumpets—that brazen blast that awakens the echoes of the old hall—and, as if it had been a call to battle, lights up many an eye there present with a dormant chivalry?

Again the silver trumpets of the pursuivants rang loudly and cheerily. What a clangour of martial notes! How the air shivers and vibrates to the ringing sounds!

And now there is a commotion at the

entrance to the old hall. The crowd in the palace-yard rend the air with loud huzzas. A dense throng of court minions and relations of officials crowd the lower end of the old hall.

Another shout from the mob without. Another ringing peal of silvery music from the heralds' trumpets, which might awaken ancient chivalry from its grave, and—

"Whirling like a blazing flame,
Its heavy falchion,"

defy a world in arms.

Then all is still, except the lingering echoes of the wild and martial clangour in the remote corners of the hall, and the rustling flutter of the silken banners that, like a forest of various blossoms, float overhead.

"Gott gracious!" said the queen, "vat dat?"

"Eh!" replied George the Third.—"Eh! What—what that? Oh! champion — Dymocke — eh? The glove, you know. Sir Henry Dymocke—champion."

There was heard now the tramp of the iron-shod feet of a horse on the stone flags at the entrance of the hall.

A loud cheer burst from the mob without.

"That's it," said the king. "Champion—Dymocke. Has the gold cup, though. Perquisite—don't like perquisites. Don't happen often, eh?"

"Gott gracious!" said the queen.

Another much more genteel and courtly shout now arose from within the hall; and a lane was made for Sir Henry Dymocke, the hereditary champion of England, to advance to the upper end of the banquet-room, where he was to defy to mortal combat all and every one of the grade of knighthood, who by word, act, or deed, should dare to question the right of King George the Third to the crown of England.

The hereditary champion was encased in steel armour from head to heel. A plume of three white feathers, tipped with azure, floated above his helmet. His spurs were of gold, and a scarf of blue and silver tissue crossed his corselet, having heavy bullion tassels dependent from it.

The horse was in half-armour. A rich saddle-cloth of crimson velvet trailed upon the floor, and the arms of England were embroidered in pearls and gold upon it.

A steel spike projected from the head panoply of the horse; and, as the noble animal stepped up the old hall, there was a fretfulness of manner about its head, and a wild look about its eyes, which showed that it was rather scared by the flash of jewels and the glare of many colours.

The champion was preceded by a couple of heralds, in their gorgeous and stiff tabards. They carried each a silver trumpet.

Clarencieux — king-at-arms — followed them, carrying a scroll in his hand.

Then came the knights' banner.

Then the champion.

Two pages followed. One bore his shield, the other his lance.

And so up the centre of that stately hall—tramp, tramp, with its iron-shod feet upon the sounding flag-stones, strode the horse, tossing its head, and snorting with surprise at all it saw around it.

The court ladies waved their handkerchiefs. The courtiers clapped their hands.

The king smiled.

"There—you see—eh? Charlotte, Charlotte—you see—champion. Kill all the world—eh? Gold cup's a perquisite, though—eh? Don't like that—eh? Blanchard! What, gone! Colonel Blanchard—"

"Your majesty is respectfully and humbly informed," said a gold-stick in waiting, "that Colonel Blanchard, of your majesty's Guards, is not here!"

"Not here, eh? Was here—was here, though, this minute. Officer on duty—on guard, eh? Sure he was here."

"Your majesty is right."

"Right—right! To be sure."

The gold-stick bowed so low, that nothing could be seen of him but the middle of his back; and then the two heralds, who preceded the champion, paused, and placed their trumpets to their lips.

One full-toned, ringing blast from the silver throats of the trumpets put an end to all whispered conversation in the hall; and hardly had the clanging sounds died away when Clarencieux, king-at-arms, advanced a step, and from the scroll he bore, read a challenge.

A challenge to all knights, of all degrees, to come forward there and then, and dispute the title of the recently crowned king, or for ever hold their peace.

And then the two heralds turned to one side of the hall, and blew a loud challenge on their trumpets; then to the other side, a second challenge; and then toward the door, a third.

And Sir Henry Dymocke took off the glove—the iron-clamped and bound gauntlet—from his right hand, and flung it down on the stone pavement of the hall.

And the trumpets gave one last, loud blaring sound of defiance.

"There, Charlotte," said the king; "you see—eh?—the glove. If anybody had anything to say—or wanted to fight—eh?—against us, you know. Why, they would have to come and pick up the glove—eh? What? what? what?"

"Gott gracious!" said the queen.

A young girl dashed out from amid the throng of spectators in the hall. She reached the glove in a moment; and lifting it from the floor, she held it above her head, and in a clear, high voice she cried,—

"Long live Harold the Second!"

Another moment, and before a cry could be uttered—before an arm could be raised to stop her—she had turned and plunged among the crowd again, conveying with her the champion's gage of battle—the iron-clamped glove of Sir Henry Dymocke.

CHAPTER II.

THE ROUTE TO TYBURN.

The autumn wind blew keenly and fiercely around the massive stone walls of Newgate, on the Monday morning that succeeded the coronation, of which we have given our readers but a faint glimpse.

From the palace to the prison is a step in the march of events which has been common enough to lose almost the flavour of a novelty; and we may well leave for a time the gorgeous old hall at Westminster, and the solemn abbey, with its thousand glorious and mystic reminiscences of the past, to gaze awhile upon that dreary pile in old London, which, with its granite aspect, seems to frown upon the tide of humanity which, during the busy hours of the day, floats past it.

Standing boldly on the brow of the eastern swell of ground, which, in that direction, bounds the valley of the Fleet, Newgate, square, compact, and defiant—cold, rigid, hard, and dense—seems as if it would stem the full ocean of London life that toils up the hill; and, passing the old church of St. Sepulchre's, seeks the marts of commerce and enterprise that lie yet another half-mile beyond.

And who that passes that gloomy prison-house fails to accord to it the attention of an upward glance—so rich it is in recollections of the past—stormed once as it was, like the old Bastille of Paris; but not like it, to fall to rise no more—for Newgate was never the tyrant's dungeon, in which political creeds were converted into social offences—burnt once as it was by a fanatic crowd, who only sought flames as part and parcel of the wild saturnalia they enjoyed; and yet now calm, cold, and terrible in its compact integrity, with its little windows thickly stanchioned, and its deeply indented doorways far away in the massive walls.

In a cell—a cell with the granite walls, roof, and flooring—that out of

stone, in which there lies so precious and fair a kernel, sits—no, crouches with her hands clasped over her face—her face and hands both resting on her knees—her long, fair hair in many a tangled curl and wavy spiral floating to her feet, and with a dancing motion resting on the stone floor—a young girl.

A prison dress of a kind of gray serge is about her: coarse and common as it is, what a wondrous grace it has borrowed from the "image divine" that it encloses!

The dim light in the cell seemed as if it had concentrated itself about the head and hair of the young creature, who, thus apparently abandoned by God and man, was the inmate of that sad abode. Like a nimbus, the few and fading rays of the autumn moon flickered and floated, so to speak, about her head. In folds fantastic, the coarse serge settled on the stone floor, and for all she moved, or for all she spoke, she might have been but a sculptured form, forming part and parcel of the general stony structure that was around her.

Deserted alike by God and man, did we say? Ah, no—no! A thousand times no!

Heaven was about to drag the pure spirit from out the furnace of affliction.

Man was raving in her cause at the iron gate of Newgate.

Rest yet awhile, gentle, fair, and innocent Alice Home—that is her name—rest awhile in thy stony cell! Thou art still now. We wish to look into the eyes of this man, who is raving in your cause at the iron gate of Newgate.

A youth—a mere youth—Gerald Alton—slim and tall, but rather delicate than powerful, his eyes suffused and bloodshot with tears and much weeping, his face pale and haggard, his hair in wild disorder—is at the iron gate.

With his open hand, with his clenched hand, with both his hands, he beats at the iron wicket of the porch of Newgate.

"I will see her! I must see her! She is innocent! Alice—Alice! You shall not kill her!—it is murder! murder! murder! Have some mercy! Are you men, and yet have no mercy? Let us be merciful to each other! Alice! Alice! Alice! Let me see her—let me die with her, for her—for her a thousand times! She is innocent—innocent! Help! help! O God! help me, and put some grain of pity in the hearts of these men! Alice! Alice! Alice!"

The hour was early—half-past seven. Not many passengers were abroad.

The business of the day had not fairly commenced. A man on the opposite side of the way was taking down the shutters of a shop.

"Let me see her—oh! let me see her one moment—only one moment!"

Bang! bang! bang! went the delicate closed hand against the iron wicket. There was blood upon the heads of the old nails that projected massively from the door; but still he beat at it.

"Only for one moment! Ask the governor for me; tell him I will bless him while I live! Alice—it is Alice Home I wish to see! O Heaven! is there no pity—no pity?"

He beat again on the iron wicket.

The blows had a deadening, sickening sound about them. It was at midnight he had commenced them, and his hands were bruised and shaken.

The man opposite put down the shutters he had just lifted from the window, and looked over the way at this frantic youth.

"Well," he said, "most folks hammer to get out of the old stone jug, but this young fellow hammers to get in."

"Mercy! Oh, have mercy, some of you! I must see her—I tell you all she is innocent! She cannot—must not be killed innocent, you know! It is murder—a judicial murder! Help, mercy! Alice—Alice—my Alice!"

That was the first time he had said "my Alice," and the word seemed to overpower him; for, with a cry of such despair that it might almost have penetrated to the cell within, he sank down

by the gate of the prison; and it was very strange that he assumed the same attitude there—without—in the open cold September air, as that young girl did in her stony cell.

His hands over his face—his bleeding, bruised hands. His face and hands both resting on his knees.

Poor boy!

He was but a boy. How sad to have the heart so riven in early life, ere it has gathered strength of resistance to the rude shocks of mortal existence!

Poor boy!

And very strange it was, too, that at that moment, from out the cold autumnal sky, there came a white flickering ray of light—a watery beam of the glorious sun,—and it wandered down the cold stone wall of Newgate, and passed the sculptured pillars over the porch, and past the two little windows on each side, and past the porch and the wicket, until it fell upon the head of the afflicted one. And there it rested.

Was it a promise? Did it speak to the poor heart in the voice of Heaven and say, "Be comforted. Lo! I am with you"?

Something cold touched his hands. He looked up.

A poor woman selling milk was close to him. She held toward him one of her little tin cans, and with tears starting to her eyes she said, gently,—

"Come, come—what be the matter with 'e? Why, 'e be but a child! Drink, lad—drink!"

"No—no!"

What a world of woe was in the tone of his voice as he uttered that word, "No!"

"Well, but if ye don't take something—"

The woman paused.

"I shall die," said Gerald. "I mean to die with her. Alice, Alice. What is that?"

"The chimes."

"Chimes—chimes? Oh, good God. Time—time is going, and I have not seen her. What time?"

"It be a quarter past seven."

He sprang to his feet. He rushed to the wicket again; and still more frantically he beat at it with his clenched hands.

"Alice! Alice! Alice! I must, I will see you! You are innocent! I will die with you—for you! Mercy, mercy!"

The wicket was flung open.

"Ah!"

A brutal, coarse face appeared at the opening; and there was a significant motion to and fro of the head to which the face belonged for a moment or two, and then the turnkey spoke.

"I tell you what it is, my fine fellow, you will get yourself locked up."

"Yes, yes—with her?"

"No!"

"No?"

"I says no, and I means no! If so be you only go on in this here way, as you have been agoing on, at this here wicket till Mr. Mould comes down, why, you will get nabbed as sartain as my name's Blunt!"

The youth tried to get hold of the huge rough hands of Mr. Blunt.

"Sir, sir—you—Mr. Blunt, you are a good man—you are so kind, and you—you will pity me!"

"Be off."

"But, dear, good sir — Alice, you know—poor, dear Alice—" His sobs nearly choked him—"if I could see her. Only for a moment."

"Bah!"

"One moment? You will not let me hold your hand, sir. See, I pray to you—I kneel to you!"

"Boh!"

"I never knelt before but to Heaven."

"Boh!"

"Oh! have pity. Tell me—tell me you think she will be spared—saved! Alice, you know—Alice Home. Indeed, dear sir, she is innocent—quite innocent—as some angel, innocent. It is murder!"

"I tells you what—"

"Yes, yes. Bless you!"

"I'm Blunt by name and blunt by

natur'. Is this here Monday mornin', or isn't it?"

"It—is—Monday morning."

How poor Gerald shuddered!

"Then Alice Home is down for Tyburn, I tells you."

"No—no! O God, no!"

"Say I'm a liar at once!"

Bang went the wicket shut. Gerald held up his hands skyward.

"Oh Heaven, if there be no justice on earth—no pity—no mercy! do Thou of Thy infinite grace and goodness spare her—spare her!"

Ding-dong—ding-dong. The half-hour past seven.

A curious little throng of persons began to collect about Gerald.

"What is it?" asked one.

"Why, it's a hanging," said another.

"Oh, indeed."

"Yes, don't you know? There's a young girl to be taken to Tyburn this morning and hung, for stealing a diamond bracelet at Mr. Ambrose's, the jeweller's, on Ludgate Hill."

"Oh, indeed! Thank you."

"She will start at eight o'clock."

"Ah! I'm busy—thank you; I must be off."

"Very good, sir."

With his hands clasping his head, Gerald listened to all this, and looked from one speaker to the other, and then he made a wild rush up the steps that led to the governor's house, as the portion of the prison which is in the occupation of that functionary is called; he knocked loudly and sharply at the door.

"Now," said Mr. Blunt, as he opened his wicket, and leaned out in an easy attitude. "Now he is in for it I rather don't think. Oh, dear—no!"

The door of the governor's house was opened. A man ran out on to the topmost step, and caught Gerald by the collar.

"I told you so," said Mr. Blunt, the turnkey. "Now he's in for it, I should say, rather. That's Mr. Mould."

The crowd began to thicken, and to take an interest in the affair.

"You young rascal!" cried the man who had collared Gerald, "you have been at this sort of thing all night long."

"Hold! hold!" cried a gentleman, likewise emerging from the governor's house.

This gentleman was in canonicals, and was the reverend ordinary of Newgate.

"But, sir," said Mould.

"Nay, nay! Let him be—let him be. It is hard to punish the lad for excesses committed in his grief. My good young man, now go home, I pray you. The young person in whom you interest yourself, and for whom you feel so much, has been tried by a jury of her countrymen and found guilty, and she must suffer."

"No—O God! no! Sir, she is innocent."

The clergyman shook his head.

"Come, come, now. Go home—go home."

A shout was raised at this moment by some boys, who had collected on the other side of the way.

The sheriff's carriage had appeared in the Old Bailey; from a yard opposite the prison a cart at the same time was driven forth; a posse of mounted constables came then at a trot up the Old Bailey from the direction of Ludgate Hill.

The crowd, in a most magical manner, seemed then to increase from a few dozen persons to a multitude.

With cries and screams, Gerald Alton saw all these changes; all these preparations for the judicial murder of her whom he loved better, oh! far better than his life. And he stood on the steps of the governor's house, and he shrieked aloud.

It was awful to hear him.

"God bless me," said the sheriff, "that is very—a—a—very—I may say disagreeable."

"Very, sir," said the clergyman. "It is a young man of the name of Gerald Alton. He is an apprentice at Mr. Ambrose's, where Alice Home committed the theft for which she is to suffer at Tyburn to-day."

"Yes—a—yes. Well, is all ready? O Mr. Mould, there you are—there you are, sir. Time, is it not?"

"Not quite, sir."

With clear pertinacity, and with sharp tones—each one of which seemed to fall upon the heart of Gerald Alton—the clock of St. Sepulchre's struck the three-quarters past seven.

The boys in the crowd now cheered, they did not know what for, and then they yelled and hooted, as a thin, spare man, with one eye, got up into the cart that had issued from the yard opposite Newgate.

That was the hangman.

Then a sort of frenzy took possession of Gerald Alton, and from the steps of the governor's house, he, in a high-pitched voice of awful intensity, spoke.

"Murder! murder! murder!" he cried. "Murder is about to be done! The young, and the innocent, and the good will suffer, and no one has pity. Help! O men and women of England! mercy! mercy! Save her—save Alice Home, for she is innocent; and were she ten times guilty, had she taken ten diamond bracelets, is it right, can it be right, can it be just and proper in the face of God, before the light of His day, to kill—to murder her? Help! O save her—save her! So young, so fair, so good, so innocent! She—she is but seventeen years of age! she would not give a moment's pain to the meanest thing that creeps. No father, no mother, no brother, no sister—all alone she is; and now they want to drag her to death. Murder! murder! God, it is murder! Help!"

Yells and cries burst from the crowd as this appeal found its way to their human sympathies, and it was quite evident to the authorities that a very dangerous concourse of people were assembling.

People from Blackfriars—from that region lying nestling by the old Temple, and known as Alsatia in olden times; people from over the water in shoals; people from the nest of lanes and courts, and squalid objects from Smithfield down to Field Lane in the valley of the Fleet.

A dense mass of ten thousand persons at least yelled, groaned, hissed, and shouted within view of the grim walls of Newgate.

The mounted police officers ranged themselves around the cart.

The terrified sheriff ran into the governor's house.

A couple of men, who had issued out of Giltspur Street, bearing a coffin and tressels, which were intended to be placed in the cart, were knocked down and seriously injured, while the coffin itself, in two minutes, was reduced to splinters.

"A riot, I see," said Mr. Mould. "Blakeney!"

"Ay, sir," said a mounted police officer.

"Take that young fellow, Gerald Alton, into custody at once, and bring him in here."

"Yes, sir."

Gerald heard the order, and he made but one leap from the steps of the governor's house into the crowd.

"No, no!" he shouted. "I must see her; God help her! I must see her. Save me to see her!"

The roar that burst from the thousands of throats of the mob was something terrific, as it opened and seemed to swallow up the lithe and delicate form of Gerald Alton.

The officer looked aghast.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Mould, I shall not be able to get him."

"Then make haste and be off."

"All right, sir."

"I don't see the coffin."

It was the motion of the officer's lips, and his glance toward Giltspur Street, that let the foremost of the mob guess what he said, and loud cries arose of—

"The coffin! the coffin! They want the coffin! Hurrah! hurrah! Let them have it!"

Then every one who had a bit of the coffin flung it at the officers, and the cart, and the hangman; and many a

sharp stone came likewise with the shower.

Then a yell that transcended anything that had yet been heard arose from the mob, as there emerged from an inn yard close to Newgate a man on a black horse of great size and strength, and made his way up to the cart.

This was Jonas Brand, a well-known Bow Street runner, as the officers were called, and whose duty it would be to head the procession to Tyburn.

All was ready.

St. Sepulchre's clock struck eight.

At the moment Alice's cell door was opened, and the officials of the prison appeared on the threshold.

Then the love of life came strongly on the heart and brain of the young girl, and she clasped her hands and screamed and prayed for mercy.

"No, no! Oh, in deed and in truth I did not steal the bracelet. I did not take it—I never saw it. I am innocent. Spare my life. I am so young—so helpless."

Then a man walked into the cell—a man with one eye. He laid his hand upon her shoulder.

"Come!"

With a cry, Alice shrank like a wounded bird from his touch.

"Mercy! mercy!"

"Seek it in heaven!" said the clergyman.

Pale and ghastly, with a trace of blood upon her delicate lip, Alice looked about her. She said no more aloud, but bowing her head upon her breast, she shuddered and followed them all from the cell. It was very faintly to herself that she said, in a low, moaning tone,—

"I shall soon be with you, mother."

Two minutes, and a wild cry and commotion in the crowd told the appearance of the condemned girl. A strong reinforcement of police officers had been procured, and at five minutes past eight the procession of death started for old Tyburn.

Alice Home was in the cart, and the ordinary of Newgate was with her. The man on the large black horse—Jonas Brand—rode in front. Immediately following him came the sheriff in his coach. Then about thirty mounted officers in all surrounded the cart and followed it.

So beautiful, so young—looking, in fact, much younger than she really was—poor Alice was at once the grief and the commiseration of all beholders. The mob poured out of the Old Bailey, and down Snow Hill toward Holborn Bridge, like a torrent.

The cart could only get on at a foot pace.

Then Jonas Brand motioned some of his men to get out of his way, and he rode close to the cart.

"Reverend sir," he said to the ordinary, "will you allow me to speak to the prisoner for a moment?"

"Nay, not now; not now."

"It is in the interests of justice. Only a word or two."

"Poor girl! you ought to let her be. She still denies her guilt."

"One moment, reverend sir."

"Well, well."

"Alice Home," said Jonas Brand, as he bent over the side of the cart, "listen to me!"

Alice shuddered.

"I really think you would have been let off if you would have told where that valise was to be found."

"No, no—"

"Yes, and even now—"

"No. I promised my mother, at her last moments, that until I was twenty-one years of age I would never betray the place of its concealment."

"What is in it?"

"I know not."

"Girl, what if even now I would promise you life?"

"Life—life! O God! help me!"

"Yes, life, if you would say where that small leathern valise is to be found."

"I am innocent."

"That is nothing—you are condemned. Come, now, will you purchase your life?"

"I will! I will! O God, it is hard

to die. Mother, you will forgive me—you did not think of this."

"To be sure not."

"I promise, then, that if I am reprieved to-day, I will tell you where the valise is to-morrow."

"No; say where it is now, and you shall be saved."

The cavalcade had at this moment reached the foot of Snow Hill, and the mob had been joined by a powerful reinforcement from Fleet Market, and the neighbourhood on the northern side of what is now Farringdon Street.

Notwithstanding all the threats and imprecations of the constables, it was impossible, for a few seconds, to proceed, and during those few seconds the mob brought Gerald Alton to the front, amid repeated cheers.

Hoisted from shoulder to shoulder, and almost literally walking over the heads of the people, Gerald Alton was brought sufficiently near to the fatal cart to make himself heard, and he cried out, in tones of agony,—

"Alice! Alice! dear Alice!"

She heard the cry, and she turned and saw Gerald there, held aloft by the crowd; and she strove to reach him by stretching forth her arms, as she answered his cry,—

"Gerald—dear Gerald."

"Speak, girl. I promise you life and love with that boy you think so much of, if you will tell me where is the valise."

"On your word—on your oath?"

"I swear it!"

"In the dry well at Corfe."

"Where?"

"Corfe Castle, in Dorsetshire."

"Good. Drive on there! Charge the crowd, and use your hangers, my men, if they will not let you pass. Charge!"

Alice uttered a cry of despair, and sunk back in the cart; she felt that she was betrayed.

CHAPTER III.

THE OLD PALACE AT KEW.

On that same morning when Alice Home, whom we must leave for a short space at Holborn Bridge, was brought out of Newgate to die, his most gracious majesty, King George the Third, took an early walk in the private gardens of the old red-brick palace of Kew.

A couple of lords in waiting had been aroused at what they considered the unchristian-like hour of five in the morning, and were sauntering along after his majesty, at a distance of about fifty paces.

The morning was decidedly raw, decidedly gusty, and gave indications of rain.

His majesty looked rather red in the face as he encountered the south-eastern wind, and there was about his royal eyes that very wide-open look which appeared ever on the stretch to catch some meaning, or to eliminate some idea which baffled it.

Then King George the Third had a habit of conversing with himself, which, since it by no means fatigued the understanding, answered very well, as in the words of the poet,—

"None but himself could be his parallel."

But at the end of a shady walk, which was terminated by some variegated laurels of great size and beauty, his majesty paused abruptly.

"Very odd,—very, very odd! Where can he go? Where is he? where—where—where, eh?"

After this speech, or succession of interjectional sounds, the king turned and retraced his steps, saying,—

"Ah, to be sure—that's it—where does he go? Eh, eh, eh? where does he go? where does he go?"

The royal eyes now opened wider than ever, and the two lords in waiting, fancying that something was wanting of them, advanced, with low bows.

"Well, well. Seaford—Hamilton, eh, eh?" cried the king, "what is it?"

"We thought your majesty spoke."

"Spoke—spoke? To be sure we did. Was it not you, eh, you, Seaford, who said something to us about Blanchard?"

"I had the honour, your majesty," said Lord Seaford, "but it was with no view of being in any way detrimental to Colonel Blanchard."

"Well, well; of course not—of course not. What was it, eh?"

"I had the honour of stating that Colonel Blanchard seems to be very unhappy."

"Unhappy, eh, eh? Well, well?"

"And that he seems to be under some very strange influence, and to be obliged to obey the directions of somebody or something, whenever he or it shall choose."

"What, what, what? Something or somebody? Don't comprehend. What do you mean, eh? Ha, ha! caught you there, Seaford. Stupid as you look—not always so, though; some stupid-looking people not stupid at all—not the case with you, Seaford."

"Your majesty—"

"That will do, eh? Well, go on. Wager you a guinea, eh, a guinea?"

"About what, your majesty?"

"That you can't explain to me all about Colonel Blanchard, eh? Can you, eh?"

"I must confess, your majesty, that I cannot; and if your majesty will please to remember that is what I was saying to your majesty, and therefore—"

"Lost, lost! ha, ha! Won, won! Hand out your guinea, Seaford—hand it out. Quite as stupid as you look, you are; you shouldn't lay wagers, eh?—sure to lose."

"But, your majesty, I am not aware that I—"

"Eh, what? Hamilton, eh, appeal to you—appeal to you. He has lost, eh?"

"Most decidedly, your majesty."

"There, you see, eh? Hamilton gives it against you. Come, hand out the guinea."

With a low bow, Lord Seaford produced a guinea, which the king put in his pocket with manifest pleasure. In fact, so delighted was he with this little bit of plunder, that he was quite gracious, and with many nods and winks added,—

"Come, now, what is it all about? Out with the truth."

"About Colonel Blanchard, your majesty?"

"Just so. Now for it."

"Why, your majesty, Colonel Blanchard, who has the good fortune to stand high in your majesty's esteem, and who has so very recently been presented by your majesty with the Cumberland regiment of Guards—"

"Coldstreams? Yes, Coldstreams. All right—go on."

"Well, your majesty, the colonel is evidently very unhappy."

"Eh—what?"

"Very unhappy; and the only society he seems to like is that of his cousin."

"Cousin, cousin — eh! What cousin?"

"The young man your majesty, at his solicitation, was pleased to give the ensigncy to in the same regiment."

"Oh, yes, yes. What's his name, eh? Rufert, Hubert, eh—what—what?"

"Harold Blanchard, your majesty."

"What—eh, Harold? Well, what of him?"

"Your majesty, then, will be surprised to hear that at times the colonel will receive a note, and if he is on duty, he will leave the major in command; if he is in attendance on your majesty, he will feign illness, and go away at once. In fact, it would appear that he was under the orders of some superior power which he dare not disobey."

"Stuff! stuff! stuff!"

Lord Seaford bowed.

"Good mind to lay you another wager, Seaford, that you are all wrong."

"Oh, your majesty—"

"Stop! Eh—what! did you pay me that guinea, eh? I don't feel it in my pocket. Sure I had it, eh?"

"Quite sure, your majesty."

"Don't be so positive and obstinate, Seaford. Appeal to you, Hamilton, eh—eh? Did Seaford pay us, eh?"

"I don't think he did, your majesty," replied Lord Hamilton, with a low bow.

"There, there! hand it over, Seaford! That will do. You see, now, Hamilton, he has paid! What, what! who is this? Somebody coming."

An officer, in full dress as lieutenant-colonel of the guards, slowly advanced down the pathway.

"It is Blanchard," said Lord Seaford, in a low tone. "I only wish I could get rid of him. I want the coloneley myself!"

"Ha, ha! hollon, Blanchard! here you are!" cried the king. "Well, how goes it with you? Sold yourself, they say, to the what's-his-name, eh?"

"Your majesty!"

"Well, well! don't believe it myself, but Seaford says so."

"My lord!" said Colonel Blanchard, turning his pale face toward Lord Seaford.

"Nay, colonel, it was but a jest."

"A sorry one, my lord."

"I did not mean to wound you, colonel."

"Wound me! Oh no, my lord,

'He jests at scars who never felt a wound!'"

As he spoke, Colonel Blanchard slightly touched the hilt of his sword.

"Come, come," said the king, "no quarrelling—won't have it—won't indeed; shake hands—meet. Come, shake hands."

"On your majesty's order," said Lord Seaford.

"I have really no quarrel with my Lord Seaford," said Colonel Blanchard, looking paler, if possible, than usual, and that usual paleness in him was quite remarkable.

The two courtiers shook hands ceremoniously.

"All's right—all's right," cried the king. "Now, Blanchard, what's the news? Caught him, eh — caught him?"

"No, your majesty."

"Eh—what!"

"I am afraid those who gave your majesty advice to send a party of your guards in search of a highwayman, brought but little judgment to bear on the matter."

"Well, it was Albemarle. You see, his coach was stopped on the Richmond Road by this—this—"

"Owlet," said Lord Seaford.

"Yes, Owlet—Owlet. But I don't believe all that is said of him; it can't be, you know, eh? A man, you know, sirs, can't be an owl, and an owl can't be a man, eh? What do you say to that, Hamilton? Lay you a guinea about it."

"I am sorry, your majesty, that I have not a guinea with me, but Seaford has."

"No," said Lord Seaford, drily; "I only had two."

"Well, well, my lords, you can each of you owe me a guinea, and pay me to-night, since I have won."

"A faint smile flickered for a moment over the face of Colonel Blanchard as he said,—

"We went, your majesty, the whole length of the road, and, in fact, patrolled it all night, but we have seen nor heard nothing of this highwayman who is called the Owlet."

"Strange—strange!"

"It is indeed, sire," said Lord Seaford; "for my Lord Albemarle assured me that his coach was stopped, and that his coachman was so terrified that he fell off the box, and was in danger of being trampled upon by his own horses, and that the horses themselves were frightened."

"Bless me! Eh—eh?"

"Yes, your majesty; and when he said that there came to the window of the carriage a mounted man, I was going to say—"

"What? What?"

"But when he saw the face, it was not human, but bore an exact resemblance to an owl."

"Eh!"

"An owl, your majesty—a green—a sickly green sort of colour was over it. And the feathers, and beak, and eyes, were perfectly and exactly those of an owl of very large size. Surprised—and he owns terrified—he gave up his purse and watch; and the creature, be it human or otherwise, galloped off!"

"And you can't catch him, Blanchard? Eh?"

"I cannot, sire. But—"

Colonel Blanchard's pale face flushed for one half-moment with colour, and then seemed to be paler than before.

"Well?—well?"

"But if your majesty will condescend to allow me to make a communication to you—"

"Certainly—certainly. Come on—come on. My lords, we dismiss you from further attendance at present. Good day—good day. Come along, Blanchard—come along."

Lords Hamilton and Seaford bowed low; and were glad enough to go back to the palace.

The king walked on with Colonel Blanchard.

"Well, now, what is it?"

"Your majesty, I am sure, will allow me to make an appeal of mercy to you."

"Mercy? Eh? What?"

"A young girl has been condemned to death for a robbery at a goldsmith and jeweller's in the city."

"Well? Well?"

"This morning is appointed for her execution at Tyburn. There are doubts even of her guilt; but if guilty, it is to be hoped that your majesty will graciously spare her life."

"Can't do it!"

"But by your majesty's gracious permission, I will ask this as a personal favour."

"Can't do it! Steal people's goods—eh? Hang her! Let her be hanged! Can't possibly interfere!"

"But she is so very young—"

"Don't say another word—too late!"

"Nay, your majesty, if you would graciously—by an exercise of your royal prerogative, grant a pardon to this young creature, who is only seventeen years of age—"

"No!—No!—No!"

"A Fleet horse would convey it in ample time to Newgate."

"No, I say; I can't do it. People steal and people must be hung. Quite natural—eh? The man, Colonel Blanchard, who in my dominion would wrong another even out of a guinea, on any pretence, ought to be hung."

"I am sorry!"

"So am I—so am I! Always sorry! Fine day—that is, not very fine. Can't help it—all over soon. Hungry—eh? Hungry?"

"No, your majesty. What a magnificent Spanish chestnut that is round the copse yonder!"

"To be sure it is—to be sure! Eh? Why, here we are. What a walk we have had, to be sure! Come along—come along. Breakfast — breakfast waiting."

"Broiled trout."

"What—what?"

"I was only remarking to myself, sire, that I had ordered some trout that was sent me from town to be broiled for my breakfast; and I never, in all my life, saw such magnificent fish."

"Eh? No!"

"Mag-ni-ficent! And if I had only dared to take such a liberty—"

"What—eh? What?"

George the Third looked eagerly into the face of Colonel Blanchard.

"What? What?"

"If I had dared to offer them to your majesty."

"You may—"

"My gracious sovereign!"

"Don't mention it. Offer them. Run — run! Stay — stop —eh? No, run!"

"I will run back to the palace, and they can be cooked and ready for your majesty by the time your majesty has leisurely walked back."

"Just so; run—run! That's it. Broiled trout, and all for nothing too, in September. Eh?—what? To be sure;

an excellent fellow that Blanchard—a most excellent fellow. Hem! He owes me a guinea, I think: must recollect that. Sure, though, that Hamilton and Seaford do. Ha! ha! Shouldn't lay wagers—oh dear, no! Let her hang—let her hang! Shouldn't take other folks' goods—eh?"

The nearest way back to the palace was completely round the copse, close to the magnificent Spanish chestnuts which Colonel Blanchard had pointed out to the special admiration of the king; and George the Third, who was perfectly well acquainted with Kew Gardens, knew that well, and walked along accordingly.

But the copse was densely wooded.

The Spanish chestnuts were still in full leaf, and the shade and the seclusion of the spot, for the space of about fifty paces, was complete.

Directly on the other side of some large bay bushes was a public road, and the king was opposite to the densest of these bushes, when he became aware of a footstep advancing, as if to meet him, in the opposite direction.

By the curve of the path, the person approaching was hidden from his sight. "Hilloa! Hilloa!" cried the king. "Who is it?—who is it? You Hill—is it you?"

There was no reply.

The king advanced, and so did the person whose footsteps he had heard; but although they neither walked hastily, yet, as they were approaching each other, the short distance was soon passed over. One tree, projecting some low branches halfway across the path, only intervened.

"Come, come! Who are you, eh?—eh?"

The footsteps stopped, but the king went on. He was past the tree in another moment, and face to face with the intruder. A cry of surprise and terror burst from the lips of the king.

Standing immediately before him, on the somewhat narrow path, was a tall figure, enveloped in a brown cloak from neck to heels.

But the head was visible—horribly visible.

The face bore the perfect likeness to an owl. The feathers; the beak; the large, circular eyes; the ears, too, stood up sharp and erect amid the small feathers that fringed them; and, in fact, the whole head of this otherwise seeming man was the head of a gigantic species of owl.

The king turned once completely round; and then he sought, by instant flight, to escape the dreaded presence of the Owlet highwayman.

A voice arrested him.

The voice came from the strange throat of the owl.

"King, if you attempt to stir from the spot on which you are now, I will cleave your head to the neck, and not a cry but your death one shall awaken an echo!"

The king stood rooted to the spot. A cold perspiration broke out upon his brow—upon every limb.

The Owlet had spoken in a voice that sounded just like the half-articulate efforts of the parrot and cockatoo species to converse.

Then the brown cloak that had envelopedt he Owlet was loosened by some means at the neck, and it fell slowly from off his figure to the ground.

Beneath, he was richly dressed.

He wore a coat of scarlet cloth, heavily trimmed with gold lace; a vest of white silk, embroidered with pearls; tight-fitting, white leather pantaloons, and riding boots which, without a wrinkle, reached to the knees. Gold spurs adorned their heels.

A cravat, apparently entirely of lace, was folded once round his throat, and a gold chain, of curious and rare workmanship, showed itself at intervals around his neck and upon his breast.

Suspended by a gold swivel was a pair of chamois-leather gloves, edged with lace.

By another swivel was a hat looped up with a ruby, and with a long, drooping, white feather, tipped with scarlet.

A long, straight sword hung by his side, and, indeed, trailed on the ground. Protruding from the breast of his apparel were the rich, gold-mounted butts of a pair of pistols.

"Mercy!" gasped the king. "What! what!"

"Silence."

"Yes—yes—yes—yes!"

"You are George the Third, of these realms?"

"I—a—yes! Eh? What?"

"Silence! Only reply to what I ask."

"I—oh, yes! Very well."

"Do you know me?"

"The—a—a—"

"Owlet!"

George the Third rubbed his hands together, and said something inarticulately about broiled trout.

"Listen!" added the Owlet, in that strange voice, which was so like the croaking tones of a parrot. "You have a choice to make."

"A—a—choice?"

"Yes; between death and your signature to this paper."

"What—a—eh?"

"This paper. It is you alone who can pardon one who robs; and there is one who would fain, up to this date, be so pardoned. Refuse, and you die."

"Do you think I am a fool? Die, indeed—eh? What? No—certainly not! Ah! I see—you want to be pardoned?"

"Be it so. Sign."

"To be sure. But—"

"How?—you were about to say. Here is ink; here a pen; here a pardon drawn up regularly; here a desk. Sign!"

The Owlet presented the crown of the king's hat, which he took with a sudden jerk off his head, for a desk; a pen he took from among the feathers of his owl's head; and a small bottle of ink he produced from a pocket in his vest.

"Sign!" he added, as he spread out a parchment before the king.

The words "special pardon" were at the top of the paper.

The king's eyes twinkled a little as he muttered to himself,—

"It's informal! I'll hang him, when he is caught, for all this. Hem! Well, well—"

"Sign!"

"There!"

"GEORGE REX."

"That will do. And now a question."

"That will do. Well, well. All right! Good day, Mr. a—a—Owlet—eh? What—what?"

"Another step, and you are a corpse."

"But—"

"Peace, I say! Reply to me, and move not. Do you recollect a lady by the name of the Lady Adela Salisbury?"

The king's countenance paled a shade.

"Speak!"

"Well, I—a—do."

"That is well. Did she, on the 4th day of January, in the year your father died, hold you by the breast of your apparel, and make a declaration to you which so maddened you, that you—you struck her?"

The king's face paled still further, and twice he opened his mouth as if to speak before the words came forth. Then he said, in a gasping kind of a way, as if he had not air enough in which to form the words.

"She—did."

"And you?"

"I—did."

"What was the declaration?"

"The—a—a—"

"What was the declaration made to you on that occasion by Adela Salisbury?"

"That she was legally married to my father."

"Kneel!"

"Eh?"

"Kneel, I say!"

"Murder!"

"It will be, if you refuse!"

The Owlet took one of his pistols from his breast, and the sharp click of

the lock fell alarmingly upon the ears of George the Third.

He knelt, as directed.

The Owlet took the large brown cloak from the ground, and flung it by one movement right over the head and form of the king. With a cry of fear, then George the Third fell on his hands and knees, and looked like some great animated bundle beneath the cloak.

"Remain for ten minutes, and you will be safe," said the Owlet. "Stir before that time, and your death will be on your own head!"

"Murder!"

"Silence!"

Another moment, and all was still.

A bird on a bough of one of the Spanish chestnuts alone broke the silence of the sylvan spot, by carolling a song to its mate.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ROAD TO TYBURN.

WE left that terrible cavalcade of men, horses, officials, and wild - heaving, shouting crowd, which was escorting Alice Home to death, at a juncture when despair appeared to have taken possession of the young girl, never again to be dislodged from that fair abiding-place until the gentle spirit should wing its flight to heaven.

Crushed — heart-crushed — and deceived, condemned in innocence: and no mercy, even where her guilt was presumed proved, and where, notwithstanding, mercy was most loudly called for, mocked by the semblance of a hope of life—that life which, to the young, is so bright a possession, that, as it nears its apparent end, all other of earth's treasures, and hopes, and fears, fade into the worthless dust which fairy gold leaves behind it—mocked by a hope, at that moment, which so faded at the first glance she achieved of the eyes of Jonas Brand after she had told him the secret he required of her—no wonder that poor Alice sunk back in the death-cart, and despaired.

But she had seen Gerald. She had heard Gerald utter her name.

Ah! Alice, you are not yet forsaken. There is yet a human link which holds the chain of your young life to earth. Gerald is at hand—Gerald loves you still.

And so, after the despair of the moment—after the subsidence, so to speak, of that one faint glimpse of hope that had, like a gleam of wintry sunshine, darted through the cloud-rifts of her despair, Alice opened her eyes again, and spoke faintly.

"Gerald—Gerald!"

"My dear child," said the clergyman —and he, too, was weeping as he spoke —"my dear child, do not think now of aught else but Heaven."

"He loves me—"

"Yes, He who is above all earthly love."

"Gerald loves me—Gerald—Gerald!"

The clergyman shook his head.

"It is hard," he said, "for the young to die. God help us all! I wish that this young thing had come to my house and taken all I possessed, how gladly I would pardon it for this young life!"

Then Alice rose up, and clinging to the side of the cart, she stretched forth her other hand, and in a voice of seeming entreaty she called out,—

"Gerald, Gerald! save me, save me!"

And Gerald was still, so to speak, in the hands of the people, and once again he called out to her,—

Alice, Alice! I am here!"

But he did not say that he could save her.

The officers, headed by Jonas Brand, now made a charge among the people, and along the narrow hollow way that lies at the foot of Holborn Hill. It seemed likely that a fearful scene was about to ensue.

Oaths, shrieks, shouts, yells, and strugglings; a wild commingling for a few moments of horses, officers, coaches, carts, men, women, and even little children, made up a scene of contention and horror.

Alice rose up in the cart, her fair hair

showered about her; she lifted up her hands despairingly.

"No—no!" she cried; "not for me —oh, not for me all this courage and all this suffering! I will die! I am content to die!"

"Alice—Alice!" screamed Gerald.

"Charge!" shouted Jonas Brand.

"Send for the military!" cried the sheriff, from his carriage window.

One swinging blow from a flat piece of board that was being used as a weapon by an herculean fellow in the crowd, sent the sheriff's head back into the coach again, as though it had been obliterated by the touch of the wood.

Then Gerald was borne forward by the crowd, right to the side of the cart, or within a few feet of it.

"Alice—dear Alice, I am here! Here to live with you, or to die with you."

She saw his wild, excited face; she saw his bloodshot eyes, his bleeding hands, the dashing tumult of his disordered hair, and she stretched out her arms.

"Yes, Gerald; I would not tell you when we were both prosperous, and safe, and happy; but now, now, dear Gerald—"

"Alice—my Alice!"

"Yes, your Alice. I do love you!"

With a spring that sent the brawny man who was supporting him backward among the people's feet, Gerald leaped into the cart.

"I am here! Death alone shall separate us now! I am here—here with you, Alice—my own, my beautiful, my Alice!"

He twined his arms around her, and the tears streamed from her eyes, and fell upon his fevered cheek.

"It is our bridal, Alice," he said.

"O God—O God! and I am so loved!"

"For ever—for ever!"

"Gerald, they will kill you!"

"Yes, Alice; yet will I speak. I will proclaim again and again your innocence."

He was on his knees in the cart. Alice was standing erect in it. His left arm was around her, and he stretched forth his right towards the agitated mass of human heads before him, and in a loud high voice of awful energy he spoke,—

"People, human hearts, fathers, mothers, little children, who may hear me, and speak of this day in time to come, this is murder! You who love those near and dear to you; you who have homes, and feelings, and hopes—hopes of dear joy with the chosen ones of your best affections, hear me, for murder is about to be done. This girl —this dear, good, beauteous angel; this Alice Home, who never had a thought that was not born of heaven, and never did an act that God's ministering angels might not aid her in, is condemned to die. But she is innocent—innocent! It is murder—murder—murder!"

Then the mob swayed to and fro, and the yells, and the shouts, and the screams made up a chorus of sounds that defies description.

And still the cavalcade of death was in the valley of the Fleet.

Suddenly then a roar of half dismay, half execration, burst from the crowd.

At a smart trot, a troop of what was then called the King's Light Horse came from Fleet Street, and made its way down past Fleet market, by the side of the old Fleet prison for debtors.

The gleam of the helmets of the soldiery was distinctly visible over the heads of the crowd.

The rattle of their arms and accoutrements came plainly on every ear, in the lull that suddenly ensued in the Babel of sounds that had but a moment before agitated the air.

The crowd surged on one side like a great wave.

Over the market, scattering the frail sheds and odd-shaped buildings made of boards, and baskets, and bundles in all directions swept the mob, and the way was clear for the light horse.

"Halt!" cried the officer in command. "Threes to the left. Forward!"

The troop made a sweep round the corner on to Holborn Hill.

The mob, in another wide, dense wave, found refuge in the courts and alleys to the right.

The way was clear.

"Dash on!" shouted Jonas Brand.

The officers made a rush up the hill.

"Now, young fellow," cried one of the constables, as he leant over the side of the cart, and grasped Gerald by the collar. "Now, young fellow, you will get out and be off, and think yourself lucky."

"Let him be," said Jonas Brand, with a slight smile, "I want him."

"Very good, Mr. Brand, but I thought—"

"Which you had no business to do. I want him, and he is safe where he is. Forward now!"

The officer in command of the Light Horse rode up to the sheriff's carriage, and stooping down from his horse, at the window he said,—

"I think, Mr. Sheriff, you will get on all right now, without me or my men."

The sheriff presented his face at the window, and the officer started back.

"By Jove!"

The flat board had recently made a dead level of the sheriff's face, and his nose was very much disorganized.

"Charge—fire—kill—no mercy on them!" cried the sheriff.

"My good sir!"

"I am not a good sir. Look at me!"

The officer suppressed a smile, and trotted off to the head of his troop.

"Forward!"

The Light Horse swept up the hill.

"I will see them to the Oxford Road," said the officer to himself, "and no further."

The cavalcade now made rapid progress, and although ten thousand people followed it, there was no attempt at interruption or rescue.

And Alice sank down on her knees in the cart, and placed both her hands on the breast of Gerald, while tears gushed from her eyes.

Gerald looked as pale as death, and shook in every limb.

He had not tasted food for thirty hours.

The clergyman was much affected, and kept shaking his head, and saying weak things to himself.

The hangman was looking savage, and swearing in an undertone; for some one had flung a brick at him from the crowd, and it had inflicted an ugly wound on his temple, from which the blood was slowly trickling.

Then Alice spoke to Gerald.

"My dear Gerald, you hear me?"

"Yes," he gasped.

"When I am gone you must not grieve for me, my dear Gerald."

"O God!"

"Nay, indeed you must not; because you know, my dear Gerald, that I am innocent, and that I shall be in heaven; and that if it be possible for those who go first to watch over those still on earth who are dear to them, I will so watch over you, my dear Gerald."

"Break! break!" cried Gerald. And he struck his heart as he spoke.

"No, my Gerald, you must not break your heart! Indeed you must not."

"Alice—Alice! it is breaking!"

"Do not say so, my love."

Gerald could not bear this. She was now for the first time using toward him those endearing expressions that she had never before approached. Each one wrung his heart, and it was with difficulty he could keep back the screams of anguish which each moment seemed to be starting to his lips.

"Nay, Gerald, you must be calmer now, or I cannot speak to you."

"Oh, Heaven!"

"Hush! hush! This, you know, my dear Gerald, is our last interview here."

"Here?"

"Yes; but we shall surely have many in heaven—shall we not, dear?"

"Alice! Alice!"

"Let me go on. I wish now to tell you all. Gerald, you know that I am an orphan—no father, no mother, no brother, no sister; not one human soul that is akin to me, that I know of, in all the world!"

"Yes," sobbed Gerald.

"But I was educated carefully by the good, kind friend, who only one year since by her death left me alone to fight my way in the world; and then you know that good, kind Mr. Tularong, the canon of St. Paul's, recommended me to Mr. Ambrose as a teacher to his two little girls."

"Yes, yes! God bless the day! O God! no—no! It has come to this."

"And there, Gerald, you saw me."

"Yes, I, his apprentice, saw you come into his house like an angel, Alice."

"Nay, nay."

"It was so. There seemed to come n with you a ray of light as from heaven."

"You saw me, Gerald, and were always kind, and gentle, and good to me; and one day you ventured to come after me when I left the house. Do you remember, Gerald?"

"Oh, yes—yes!"

"And you clasped your hands together, and you told me that you loved me."

"Yes—oh, yes! It was so true."

"I know it was, dear. But I was coy, and shy, and strange, and would not speak to you."

"No," sighed Gerald.

"But, dear, I did love you then."

A gush of tears came from Gerald's eyes.

Alice rested her head for one moment on his breast, and then she took one of his thin, broken, bruised hands in hers, and kissed it.

"God bless you, Gerald."

He could bear no more. Madness was surely in his brain. He sprang to his feet.

Help! help! God help us! If there be no help on earth, there should be from heaven! Hold, you there; you—you, Jonas Brand; you—yes, surely that will do. That—that should do, Jonas Brand, Jonas Brand!"

"What now?" demanded the officer, as he checked his horse, and bent his brutal gaze upon Gerald.

"Look you here, Jonas Brand. At this last moment I have something to say to you. I cannot keep it any longer. So, you see, I will say it."

"What is it?"

"Alice Home is innocent!"

"Ha! you have said that often enough, my lad; and once too often, I take it, for I mean to lock you up after the execution."

"Hear me out! Hear all—all!"

"Bo—bah!"

"I say she is innocent, because I took the bracelet from Mr. Ambrose. I took it, do you see? I am guilty alone—you comprehend, Mr. Jonas Brand? So you can let Alice go free; free as air, since I proclaim myself to be the real criminal."

"O Gerald! Gerald!" said Alice. "There is a tell-tale spirit in your eyes which will not let you say that which is untrue, and make it look like truth. I am innocent, Gerald, and so are you."

"Oh, let me—let me!"

"All that is nothing to me," said Jonas Brand. "You can accuse yourself after the hanging."

"But it is to save her."

"I know it," laughed Brand, as he gave his horse the spur, and rode on.

"It is all in vain, Gerald; and it should be all in vain," said Alice. "Let me die."

The cavalcade had reached the Oxford Road, and the troop of Light Horse trotted on in advance, the officer intending to take the first wide turning to the left, and so get back to the barracks at the King's Mews at Charing Cross.

"Now on!" shouted Jonas Brand.

The Oxford Road was tolerably clear of obstruction. It was but one mile and a half to Tyburn, and at once the whole cavalcade set off at a hard trot.

The powerful horse that drew the cart was not a whit behindhand, and the crowd found themselves soon distanced by the speed at which the death-procession went toward the place of execution.

It was a quarter to nine o'clock now.

CHAPTER V.

THE REPRIEVE—THE RESCUE FROM DEATH.

The hangman began to uncoil from round his waist a cord, which at intervals he gave a sharp pull to, in order to test its strength.

For a moment Gerald thought that his senses would leave him, and that the dreadful catastrophe of death to Alice would happen while he swooned; but, by a violent effort, he baffled the feeling of faintness, and once again looked in her fair face.

How pale she was!

The rain had begun to stream from her fair hair, head-dress she had none, and she shuddered and moaned at intervals.

The sheriff's carriage had gone faster even than the officers' horses, and it could now be seen halted about a quarter of a mile ahead.

That was at Tyburn Gate.

An immense mob was already on the ground, and following, although yet some distance behind the cavalcade, was the throng of persons who had accompanied the procession from the city.

Groans, hisses, and shouts of execration greeted the arrival of the cavalcade at the place of execution; and even Jonas Brand slightly changed colour as he saw the sea of human heads and faces before him.

"Mitchelson," he said, "you must close round the tree."

"Yes, Mr. Brand."

"And tell Mapes to get the affair over quickly."

"Yes, Mr. Brand."

The cart stopped.

And now the clergyman rose, and considered that it was his duty to say something; but he was so shaken and affected by all that had occurred, that he had lost all command of his voice, and could only shake his head, and repeat some prayer quite unintelligibly.

The mode of execution was for the condemned to be taken in the cart beneath the gallows, the rope to be placed round the neck, and then the cart driven away, leaving them suspended.

The cart was now under the gallows.

"Now, my little chicken," said the hangman, "it is soon over, I assure you, and you will think nothing of it."

With a cry of rage, Gerald flung himself upon the hangman, and grappled him by the throat.

"Hilloa! Hoy! Help! The young tiger will choke me!"

A couple of officers sprang into the cart.

A roaring yell arose from the crowd, and then, at the moment that, from pure want of breath, there was a partial silence, one loud and ringing voice cried out,—

"A reprieve!"

The officers in the cart ceased to struggle with Gerald; Alice dashed aside the clustering hair from her face, and uttered a shriek; the brutal Jonas Brand drew a pistol from his saddle holster, and yelled out,—

"A lie! It is false!"

The clergyman raised both his hands, and finding his voice in a moment, he cried,—

"Where? What reprieve? Who has it?"

"A reprieve!" again shouted the loud, clear, sonorous voice.

Then the mob, which seemed as if it had been only pausing to collect breath to do so, burst into such a ringing cheer, that its echoes spread far and wide over London.

"A reprieve!" cried the voice again.

At the farthest extremity of the crowd, on the Bayswater Road, could be seen a horseman; his right hand was elevated above his head, and in it was something that looked like a folded paper.

"A reprieve!" he cried again.

The crowd opened right and left. A lane of human faces, human breasts, and cheering human throats was made; and, with his horse one reek of foam, his own face pale and bloodless, and without a hat, the horseman galloped on, still holding up his right arm above his head.

"A reprieve!"

Once again he shouted the welcome sound; and then, within fifty paces of the gallows, his horse staggered and fell—and horse and rider were lost to sight.

Fifty hands lifted the rider.

Fifty—a hundred hands lifted the horse.

The rider smiled faintly.

The horse was dead.

"A hard gallop," he said. "Eleven miles in forty minutes. Am I in time?"

"Hurra! hurra! hurra!" shouted the mob.

They lifted the bold rider in their arms; with a surge they brought him to the gallows' foot, and he held up the paper he had in his hand as he said,—

"Where is the sheriff? This is a pardon for Alice Home, signed this morning by his majesty the king. Where is the sheriff?"

"Sir, I am here," said the sheriff, as he rose up in his coach, the top of which had been made to open, and had been, by his orders, cast loose, that he might do his duty, and see that the execution was performed.

"Then, Mr. Sheriff, this is for you."

"Oh! ah! dear me!"

"Sir?"

"It's all right, young man. Who may you be?"

"King's messenger."

"Oh! ah! God save the king! Good people, this is a pardon in full, and an order for the instant release of Alice Home, and dated this morning, at Kew."

Another cheer from the mob.

"No doubt—no doubt about it."

"You know his majesty's signature, Mr. Sheriff, I presume?" said the messenger.

"O dear, yes. It's right enough, Mr. Brand."

"Yes, sir."

"You must release the prisoner."

"But, sir—"

"Can't help it. Here is his majesty's order."

"She can go back to Newgate, Mr. Sheriff, and then Mr. Mould can do as he pleases."

"No!" said the messenger.

"And who are you that says 'No,' I should like to know?"

"I am one who will make your knave's bones ache, my friend, if you are insolent. Listen to me, good people all. Here is a full pardon from the king, which the sheriff says is sufficient, and that the prisoner should be immediately released; but this thief-taker, Jonas Brand, resists it. I call upon you all, in the king's name, to help the sheriff and the king."

Jonas Brand turned pale.

There was a tremendous roar from the crowd, and a rush of many thousands of people.

Sheriff, officers, cart, gallows, king's messenger, and people, were, in another moment, all mingled up together in a mass of confusion.

But the messenger made himself heard by those about him.

"Help me, good folks," he said. "A coach—a coach—a coach for me and the pardoned girl!"

A hackney coach was forcibly seized upon, and the messenger, springing into the cart, cried out fiercely,—

"Where is Alice Home?"

"Here!" said Gerald. "She has swooned."

"Out of the way! What is this?"

"God bless you!—ever and ever bless you, sir!"

Gerald had flung his arms round the neck of the messenger, and fairly embraced him.

"Why—why, who are you?"

"I love her, sir, and—and she—"

"Oh, I see. Well, then, you had better follow me."

"With all my heart."

The messenger caught up Alice as though she had been no heavier than a child, and at one bound he was out of the cart with her.

Gerald followed.

The hackney coach was gained instantly, and they were all three within it. Some previous directions

must have been given to the driver, for he set off at as hard a pace as his horses would go, and soon dived down a narrow street in the Oxford Road, close to where Regent Street now stands.

CHAPTER VI.

COLONEL BLANCHARD.

We now transport the reader to what is called the "Guard Room" of old St. James's Palace.

Close to the courtyard, which goes by the name of the "Colour Court," there exists an ancient apartment, in which the officers who are on guard are accustomed to sit. Adjoining to this guard-room is a suite of three other rooms, which, for the time he is on duty, belongs to the officer in command of the palace guard.

It is to the largest of these rooms that we would conduct the reader.

It is an apartment of about twenty-four feet square, and its windows look directly into the Colour Court. A bright sea-coal fire is burning in the grate. The finely carved marble chimney-piece is warm to the touch. The old painting of the walls has a sombre tint, and the massive furniture—from which the gilding is passing away—is of an age long anterior to the Georges.

Yet about the room there is an air of substantial comfort, and indeed magnificence, which gives it a regal aspect, and proclaims it to be part and parcel of a palace.

On the table lies the sword of the officer in command of the palace guard.

That officer himself is pacing the room with his hands clasped behind his back, and there are lines of deep thought upon his pale face.

No one who had seen that face once could ever again mistake it.

Colonel Blanchard is the officer who, with agitated steps, marches to and fro in that chamber. He is in full uniform as lieutenant-colonel of the Coldstream Regiment of Foot Guards, and he is a man who becomes his rank and dress; but what a look of anguish there is upon his face!

For a full half-hour he continues the restless march to and fro in the room, and then with an embroidered handkerchief he wiped his brow, as he flung himself with an air of exhaustion into a chair.

"It will drive me mad!" he said; "that will be the end of it. I know that it will drive me mad!"

He was then silent for a few moments, and appeared to be in deep thought.

"No," he then said. "No; I cannot kill him. No! I cannot lose my soul in that fashion! The fearful oath he made me take rings yet in my ears. Oh, it is horrible!—most horrible! But although I cannot kill him, yet I can die myself. Ah! some one comes."

There was a tap at the door of the room, and the colonel made an effort to compose his features to calmness, as he said, in as collected a voice as he could,—

"Come in—come in."

The door was opened, and an orderly sergeant made his appearance.

"Well, what is it?"

The sergeant respectfully saluted his colonel as he said,—

"Please your honour it is ten o'clock."

"Ten o'clock! What then?"

"Please your honour, you ordered me to come to your honour at ten o'clock."

"Yes—yes. I recollect now. Shut the door."

"Yes, your honour."

"Sergeant, I am still very uneasy about the possible fate of Captain Beauchamp."

"So are we all, your honour."

"His mysterious disappearance is a very serious—I was almost going to say—reproach to the regiment. What do the men say about it, sergeant?"

"Why, your honour, they say as how that they can't make it out at all; and young Mr. Charles Beauchamp has been among the men for the last day or two about it."

"What does he want?"

"Why, he wants to get from the men what he calls memoranda of all the outgoings and incomings of the captain on the last day he was seen alive; and you see, sir—"

A sharp tap at the door at this moment interrupted the sergeant, and Colonel Blanchard started to his feet.

The sergeant opened the door, and there appeared on the threshold a young man, of careworn aspect, and almost as pale as the colonel himself. He bowed courteously as he said,—

"Colonel Blanchard, my name is Beauchamp—"

"Beauchamp?"

"Yes, Charles Beauchamp; I am the twin brother of Captain Beauchamp, of whom nothing now has been heard for six weeks, two days, and one hour. Sir, I wish to speak with you."

[illegible]rd bowed, and motioned to the sergeant to leave the room. When the door was closed, Colonel Blanchard, whose lips now were almost white, pointed to a chair as he said,—

"Pray, sir, accept a chair, and my sincerest sympathies."

The young man sat down, and fixed his black eyes full on the face of Colonel Blanchard, who found this scrutiny, silent as it was, so distressing, that he was fain to break it by saying,—

"I think Captain Beauchamp did once say that he had a twin brother named Charles.

The visitor bowed slightly.

"You will permit me, sir, to offer you refreshment?"

"Certainly not, sir."

"Sir?"

There had been a something so cold and harsh about the manner in which these words, "certainly not," were uttered, that they might, without much sensitiveness, have been deemed offensive.

"No, sir," added Charles Beauchamp; "I do not come for refreshment, but to ask you a few plain questions."

"Sir, you will permit me to say, then, that you do not come in a manner which is likely to procure answers to your questions."

"I am, perhaps, unfortunate in manner, Colonel Blanchard; but yet I hope that the answer to at least one question I shall put to you. I have been making inquiries concerning my lost brother, and I have discovered something."

"I congratulate you."

"I congratulate myself, sir. The discovery is that on the night of his disappearance, at a quarter past one o'clock, he was seen with you in St. James's Square."

"Seen with me in St. James's Square?"

"Yes, Colonel Blanchard. And in the deposition you have made concerning him, you have stated that the last you saw of him was at half-past nine o'clock that evening preceding, when he left you here to go home, after coming to you to say that he did not feel quite well."

Colonel Blanchard was silent for a few seconds, and then, with a great command of temper and voice, he said,—

"Is that all, sir?"

"That is the beginning."

"Then it is untrue, that is all; and whoever has told you so much has told you what is false."

"No, Colonel Blanchard!"

"Sir?"

The colonel rose instantly, and looked sternly at his visitor, who likewise gained his feet.

"No, colonel," added Charles Beauchamp, "that statement is not false, and I demand of you my brother!"

"You are mad, sir!"

"No, neither am I mad; but I demand of you how it came about that you were with my brother in St. James's Square at one o'clock in the morning, and that, he never having been heard of since, you concealed that fact?"

"It is no fact."

"I assert it."

"Then, Mr. Beauchamp, I fancy your object is accomplished, which must have been to insult me."

"Colonel Blanchard, I offer you an alternative. You shall make a clean breast of this transaction, and tell me all you know about my brother, or you shall give me a meeting."

"I understand you, sir, and will gratify you."

"It is well, sir. When and where?"

"Sir, if you fancy I am going to meet you in deadly conflict in any manner contrary to the usages of gentlemen, you are mistaken. I will accept a hostile message from you, so soon as it is brought to me by proper hands."

"It shall arrive, Colonel Blanchard."

The colonel bowed.

Another moment, and Charles Beauchamp was gone.

Colonel Blanchard flung himself on a chair, and clasping his hands over his eyes, he uttered a deep groan.

"Another—another!" he said. "I must kill him now! I must kill him! O fate—fate!"

"Who blames fate, colonel?" cried a light, cheerful voice. "Fate is conduct, and conduct is fate. Ha! ha! The Mall is full of the *élite* of fashion. The queen has shown herself at Buckingham House, and—holloa! What now?"

Colonel Blanchard sprang from his chair, and grasped the intruder by the arm, as in a voice of concentrated fury he said,—

"Villain! fiend! devil! you must seek my destruction!"

"Hey-day, colonel."

"Tell me. Tell me in a word who and what you are. You know me too well."

A slight smile played for a moment over the face of the new comer, and he said gently,—

"The door is not close shut."

"Ah!"

"Allow me."

He went and carefully closed the door, and then turning to Colonel Blanchard, he folded his arms across his breast, and regarded him in silence. Colonel Blanchard opened and shut his hands nervously, and stamped on the floor, as he said,—

"Tell me now once, and for all, what is to be the end of all this? Speak—speak!"

"What has happened?"

The visitor spoke quite calmly. He was a young man, of handsome figure and face, and dressed in the uniform of an ensign of the Guard. His age might be about eight-and-twenty, and his form was one that combined the highest amount of elegance with an evident power and strength, that few men even in the middle of life possessed. The broad shoulders, the deep chest, the well-set neck, the long, muscular arms, all betokened an athlete.

This was Harold Blanchard—Ensign Harold Blanchard, as he was in rank—of his majesty's Coldstream Guards, and cousin—as it was believed—to Colonel Blanchard.

"Well?" said Harold, after a pause, "What has happened, cousin?"

"Oh! that farce!"

"Farce? What farce?"

"Cousin!—cousin! Sir, I know you not."

"Indeed, I see that you are discomposed."

"And well I may be. Who and what you are, sir, I know not, since our acquaintance is but of six weeks' standing."

"Ah!"

"And began in such folly—such misery!"

Harold stepped close up to the colonel, and looking him close in the face, said,—

"Have they found the body?"

"Good God, no!"

"Oh!"

The colonel staggered back into a chair, and groaned aloud.

"I think so long as the body is not found that you are safe enough," added Harold, "and if a few weeks more should elapse, it will be so far decomposed as to render identification all but impossible."

"Oh, if I were but dead!"

"Dead? Why, my dear friend, you would be as bad off as Captain Beauchamp then. But cheer up. This is

but a probation. The time will come when I myself will step forward and proclaim your innocence."

"Now—oh, now!"

"No. It would not do: neither you nor I would be believed now; but the time will come when what I say I believe will be sufficient!"

"You terrify me!"

"I do not wish to do so. You can serve me, and in time I will serve you. But what is it that specially raised this storm in your imagination?"

"Charles Beauchamp, the twin brother of Captain Beauchamp, has been here. He says that I was seen at one o'clock in the morning in St. James's Square, with his brother. You know that it is true."

"Some meddling fool has seen you. What further says this young man?"

"On my denial he insults me, and challenges me."

"And you will have to fight him?"

"I shall, and perhaps add another crime to my soul, and yet I did not kill Captain Beauchamp."

"You did; but you mean to say you did not murder him."

"Indeed I did not."

"Certainly not. You and he were engaged at the hazard-table, at the old Tennis Court in the Haymarket. He won of you a paltry thousand pounds, and you gave him your acknowledgment on a leaf of your pocket-book for the money. He had drunk deeply, and was touchy and quarrelsome. You both left the gaming-house together; and in St. James's Square he assailed you, saying that he would go home with you, there and then, and have his money?"

"He did—he did!"

"Finally, he struck you; you had no sword, but he had his; and in a struggle you got possession of it, and in his blind fury he ran upon it, and was killed."

"It was so! Alas—alas!"

"At that moment I came up and advised you."

"Fatal advice!"

"I advised you to say nothing about it, but to get rid of the body, and let it be believed that Captain Beauchamp had mysteriously disappeared: and I it was who climbed the railings of the Square garden, and placed the body in a little garden tool-house within the inclosure."

"It was all so."

"I saved you then from the reproach of that man's death; for everybody would have said that you killed him because he had won of you a thousand pounds. Your reputation would have been blasted—your good name gone, and all your hopes of future fortune and advancement demolished."

Colonel Blanchard moved his hands in a despairing way.

"But now all you will have to do will be just to let blood a little from this twin brother, and you will silence him: for after fighting you, his lips are closed."

"I will let him kill me."

"That would be foolish."

"At least I should be clear from you."

"From me?"

"Yes. Who and what you are I know not; but I do know that, by your possession of this fearful secret, you have compelled me to become your slave."

"You rave, colonel."

"What! Have I not said you were my cousin? Have I not got you an ensigncy in the Guard? Do I not come to you whenever you send for me? Did I not, early this morning, at Kew, so manage and manœuvre, according to your orders, that the king was left alone in the plantation? and I know not, even now, what has happened to him—for I came to town at once."

"Be easy: nothing has happened to him. He is well as ever; although possibly not with quite so royally good an appetite, because some food for meditation has been given him."

"Who, in the name of Heaven! and what are you?" cried the colonel, as he dashed his hand on to the table.

"Hush!"

"Eh?"

"The door. Some one knocks."

CHAPTER VII.

THE RING IN HYDE PARK.

In answer to the colonel's "Come in!" the orderly sergeant again presented himself, saying, sharply,—

"Major O'Balriggin, sir."

"Major who?"

"O'Balriggin, Colonel Blanchard," said a tall man, in an undress military coat, and a profusion of grey hair and whiskers. "Major O'Balriggin, unattached. The top of the morning to you, colonel; and it's mighty plased I am to see you. Sir, I'm your humble servant—to Ensign Harold. Bedad, thin, colonel, I had an idea, sir, that I was in luck this morning; for I put on my right-hand glove, sir, half the way on my left hand, sir—and when the O'Balriggins do that, sir, it manes something."

"Pray, sir, what do you want with me?"

"What do I want with you, colonel? Whist! Hoo! It's mighty aisy to guess what Major O'Balriggin ever wants with a gentleman he don't know."

"Well, sir, what is it?"

"And it's after asking what it is, you are? You are there, are you, colonel? and mighty innocent you look. Whist! Get rid of the sub. Whist! Take it?

> 'Oh, the girls of Kildare,
> They are young, they are fair.'

The top of the morning to you, ensign, and shall I open the door for you, sir, if you plase?"

The major had insinuated into the hands of the colonel a note, which a hasty glance at let him see was a challenge from Charles Beauchamp, and naming the major as his friend for the occasion.

"Very well, sir," said Colonel Blanchard, rising. "I am quite sure that Mr. Harold, my cousin, will act for me with pleasure, and therefore I leave you together."

The colonel left the room.

"By my great ancestor, Brian Boroo," said the major, "and that's mighty cool, any way. Sir, I have the honour to hope you know Major O'Balriggin, sir."

"I have heard of you, major."

"To be sure, sir—to be sure; and I think if the colonel had only said, 'Gentlemen, are you thirsty?' before he left the room, it would have had a mighty gentale sound with it."

"Well, major, let us to business."

"Business? Is it business you call it? It's pure pleasure, sir, I'm after thinking."

"That is a matter of taste, sir."

"It's not a taste of anything I've had this morning, I can assure you, Mr. Harold; but the long and the short of it is, that Mr. Charles Beauchamp wants satisfaction, sir, of the colonel."

"For what?"

"Bedad, thin, I forgot to ask him that."

"Must there, then, be a duel?"

"Must there? I should say, yes; for after calling me in, I fight my principal, always, if he backs out, you see, sir."

"Very well, major, what do you propose?"

"The ring, sir."

"Agreed."

"Swords."

"Agreed."

"Six o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Agreed."

"Give me your hand, young man. Bedad, then, and it's a rale elegant youth you are; and if ever you want a friend, rely upon old Major O'Balriggin. It's a pleasure to meet with you, sir. Are you thirsty?"

"Not the least."

"It's the only fault you have, then. Good day to you, sir; and it's first on the field we shall be."

"We shall see. Good morning to you, major."

The major left the room, humming

an Irish ditty; and Harold called to the colonel, who was in the adjoining apartment, and who could have had no difficulty in hearing all that had passed on the subject of the duel.

"You have heard?" said Harold.

"I have; but I cannot kill that young man."

"There is no occasion—only you must not let him kill you. I fancy you are master of the sword?"

"Tolerably so."

"There is a peculiar guard which is hardly known in England, which I could show you, and which, if followed up at the moment by an assault, places your opponent at your mercy for a space in which you may count eight, if he be a good swordsman, and ten, if a bad one."

"No, no. I will go as I am, and I care not for the result."

The young ensign looked at Colonel Blanchard with a certain expression of mournful compassion.

"Be assured," he said, "that if the time should come that I can make all this up to you, and relieve you from the load of misery that seems now to weigh you down, it shall be done: and you will no longer think me the Mephistopheles of your existence. I have objects."

"Are they honest?"

"As the daylight."

"I will hope so—I will hope so. Do not fail me at six to-morrow; for I must meet this young man, come of it what may."

"I will be with you in good time, colonel. Keep a stout heart, and believe yet that all will be well. Till to-morrow, adieu!"

"Farewell! farewell!"

Ensign Harold Blanchard, as he was called, passed out of the apartments of the colonel, and through the guard-room, in which a couple of officers were playing at chess.

"Holloa, Harold!" cried one, "am I right or wrong?"

"About what?"

"That old fire-eating Major O'Balriggin. Is it possible he could call on a man without bringing him a challenge?"

"Excuse me," said Harold.

"That is an answer. Good morning."

Harold passed on. The sentry brought his musket to "attention." The young subaltern slightly touched his hat, and then strolled out into St. James's Street. He took his way about halfway up the street on the left-hand side of the way, and then dived down a narrow half-court, half-street that was there. Another moment, and he had pushed a door open, and was in a perfectly dark passage.

The door swung shut behind him.

In another quarter of an hour there emerged into the narrow street, by the same doorway, a quiet-looking man, dressed as a superior tradesman, and apparently about the middle of life. He walked sedately to a livery-stable in Piccadilly, and entering the yard, he said, in a somewhat stately tone,—

"I want my horse. Mr. Sadgrove's horse."

"The black horse, sir?"

"Yes."

"All right, sir. Hey, Jem! Mr. Sadgrove's horse."

Mr. Sadgrove loitered at the entrance of the inn-yard till a beautiful black charger was brought out to him, on which he carefully and slowly, as a middle-aged gentleman might, mounted.

"What is that you were telling me, James," he said, "about some highwayman on the Richmond Road?"

"Lord bless you! yes, sir—the Owlet. Why, sir, only last night, Sir Francis Doubleday's carriage was stopped on the common."

"The common?"

"Barnes Common, sir; and he was robbed of more than seven hundred pounds."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir; and if you go that way I would advise you to take nothing with you."

"But that might provoke this high-

wayman, or Owlet as you call him, and bring danger on me."

"Well, sir, so it might, and I don't know very well what to advise."

"That is just my opinion, James. Good day. Here is your money."

"He's a funny gentleman," said the hostler, looking after Mr. Sadgrove; "and though he has put up his horse here for more than a year, I don't know a bit more of who or what he is now than I did the first day. But he pays like a king—that he does."

Mr. Sadgrove rode towards Kensington, and when he got fairly out of London, he reined in his horse, and patted it on the neck, as he said,—

"So, Leo—so here we are again, safe and sound, my brave Leo."

The horse appeared to comprehend him; for it arched its neck, and made a grateful sort of sound.

"Well, Leo, you shall see a coronation, I hope, some day, old friend, if all things go well. The Owlet may vanish from the scene, and the young subaltern, Harold Blanchard, may disappear, and Mr. Sadgrove may be known no more; but a new king to England may claim the allegiance of a nation."

Now if any one had heard these words, they must have been struck with the likeness of the voice to that of Ensign Harold; and, in fact, on that black horse—of such symmetry and blood that it was the admiration of all who saw it—sat none other than the much-dreaded highwayman, the Owlet, who had the address to become an ensign in the king's Guards, and to baffle, as yet, all pursuit and all inquiry.

He had said he had objects. What they were, a perusal of this narrative will shortly disclose. They were as strange as they were, in his mind, legitimate.

He then rode on at an easy pace, and passed through the old village or town of Hammersmith, and took a narrow road which led him toward the old wooden bridge at Fulham.

By this bridge he crossed the Thames, and riding down a country lane—the tall trees on either side of which made it dark and obscure even at mid-day,—he paused at a small hut that could hardly be perceived amid the dense foliage which surrounded it on all sides.

The Owlet then—for we may as well call him by that name, since he is under the greenwood tree—blew a quavering note on a silver whistle, and then there was a movement among the bushes, and a man appeared.

"Captain, is that you?"

"It is. Is all still?"

"Not a mouse stirring."

"It is well. Take Leo, and let him be ready for me here, at sunset."

"Ay, ay, captain. Then is the time for us."

"Silence!"

The man said not another word, and the Owlet parted the long branches of what seemed an impenetrable bush, to the right and to the left, and found within it a narrow path, on which he entered. The bush then closed up behind him, and he was lost to sight.

And what was his most gracious majesty King George the Third doing now? and how did he escape from the folds of the Owlet's cloak?

And what was said by my lords Seaford and Hamilton, and by her gracious majesty Queen Charlotte, when she heard of the terrible adventure?

Simply nothing.

His most gracious majesty King George the Third thought it better to keep the whole matter to himself, and said not one word about it. He had emerged from the cloak after a time, when he heard all still about him, and had made his way into the palace by a private door, of which he had the key.

But he missed the boiled trout.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE YOUNG LOVERS.

We return to those young hearts which, from a depth of despair from which they

would have themselves said there was no redemption, were lifted up to a heaven of joy.

Gerald Alton and Alice Home.

Oh, what sunlight was in his eyes, as he tremblingly held in his the hands of Alice, and looked into her eyes, as—half doubting if she had not actually passed the dim portal of the grave—she sat opposite to him in the coach, which rapidly conveyed them both from the terrible scene which had been enacted around them at Tyburn!

The swoon which had come over Alice when first the word "reprieve" struck upon her senses, had not lasted long.

Joy soon brings, to counteract whatever apparently disastrous effects it may have, its own antidotes.

And so Alice opened her eyes and looked at Gerald, who, with so much ecstasy of affection, was gazing at her with all his soul in the fixed attention with which he regarded her.

And when he saw those gentle eyes once more, with the light of life in their pure depths, he uttered a cry of such joy, such rapture, that Alice could not but echo it.

The third person in the coach—the king's messenger, as he called himself—shrank back, for he felt that there was something sacred in the affection of those two young hearts; and but that at that moment he must, by any further action indicative of his presence, have introduced disturbing elements in their hearts, he would have stopped the coach and left it.

But they forgot him. They did not see him. If all the world had been gazers upon their looks and acts, and listeners to their words, they would have forgotten that they lived under such observation; and all in all to each other, they would have looked into each other's eyes, and found there the only world they cared to remember.

Then, for a moment, Alice seemed to think that she was no longer an inhabitant of this earth, and that Gerald had followed her to the grave.

"Ah, Gerald!" she said, "why did you not stay?"

"Alice! Alice! my Alice!" was all he could reply to her.

And they clasped each other's hands, and with looks of ineffable affection they regarded each other in silence for a time.

The coach rumbled on; and the narrow dark street in which they were sent its various shadows and its various noises into the vehicle, so that those two enraptured and romantic young souls were likely soon to be recalled to the fact that they were still in the midst of the busy, every-day world they had been accustomed to see about them.

The king's messenger was the first to break the silence.

"Let me explain to you both," he said, "what it is necessary you should know."

At the sound of his voice, it seemed as if they had just become cognizant of his presence, and they turned to him with looks of surprise.

"Calm yourself, Gerald Alton," he added, "and you too, Alice Home. All is real about you; and in me you see the man who was well pleased to be the means of bringing the pardon from the king."

These words, plain and simple as they were, at once stripped from before all the circumstances that had occurred the veil of doubt and uncertainty; and they both understood the true position of affairs.

"Ah, sir!" cried Gerald, as he seized the hand of the stranger, "how can I live long enough to thank you, and to show you how grateful I would fain be?"

"And I—and I," said Alice. "You have snatched me from a terrible death."

"I will not commit the affectation," said the stranger, "of attempting to deny it. Had I not reached Tyburn in time, you would have fallen a victim to the severity of the criminal code of this country, which has the same punishment for a petty larceny as for a hideous murder."

"But, sir," added Alice, "sir, you must know that I am innocent."

"That I can well believe. A judicial murder is not so rare a thing that one need doubt it."

The coach stopped.

The sudden cessation of the wheezing, and rumbling, and swaying from side to side of the vehicle, produced a certain amount of alarm in the heart of Alice; and she held the hands of Gerald still tighter as she said faintly,—

"There is no danger? O Gerald! Gerald! if even yet—"

"Be calm," said the stranger; "all is well."

"Yes, sir; I will trust to you."

The coachman had dismounted from his box; and then the king's messenger hastily alighted—that is to say, quietly rather than hastily; for there was a calm kind of dignity in all his actions, which stripped them of any appearance of haste or precipitation.

Some few words passed between him and the coachman, and then he held the door of the vehicle open, as he said, in the soft, gentle voice which seemed to be natural to him when he made no effort to assume a different tone,—

"Alight here, and fear nothing."

They were in another moment by the side of the stranger, on the narrow pavement of a small street, which appeared to contain but few open houses or entrances to houses, but which seemed to be bounded on each side by the walls of tall buildings, and the palings and brick divisions of yards and gardens.

The coach rumbled off.

"Now follow me, and fear nothing," said the stranger.

"We will follow you, sir," said Gerald. "Take us where you will; we follow you with every confidence."

"Yes, Gerald," said Alice; "that is right."

Gerald had not the most distant idea in regard to what part of London they were in. So entirely absorbed had he been while in the coach, by a contemplation of Alice, that he had taken no note whatever of the route by which they had proceeded from Tyburn.

And in London there were so many dull, dingy, narrow old streets, exactly of the pattern of the one they were in, that there was nothing by which he could particularly identify it.

To be sure, on casting his eyes to the corner, when he reached there, he saw the half-obliterated name posted up,—

"King Street."

That was the name of the street then; but as in London there were then about three hundred King Streets, such a name by no means localized the spot.

With Alice's arm closely clasped under his own, Gerald followed the stranger.

"Dear Alice," he said, "how different is the present hour to those dreadful ones—"

Alice burst into tears, and Gerald paused.

"Dear one, I have pained you."

"O Gerald! Gerald! my heart is so weak—I have suffered so much."

"I blame myself, my Alice. It is not I who should revert to the past, or recall to your mind the horrors we have both gone through."

"We must strive to forget them, Gerald."

"Yes, dearest—yes."

"And yet how wrong, how wicked it would be, if I were to forget all your devotion and all your love, Gerald! Can I forget how you followed me to seeming death? How you would have died for me, if they would but have let you do so? O Gerald! Gerald! I did not know that you could love me as you did."

"As I do, dear Alice?"

"Yes, Gerald, as you do; and I will never, never forget."

Gerald pressed one of her hands in his, as he then said, falteringly,—

"And, Alice dear, will you likewise recollect that—that—"

"What, Gerald?"

"That you said—that is, that when you thought our last words were being spoken—that you then said you would

have no reserves, and that you would tell me truly from your heart that you loved me."

"Yes, Gerald," replied Alice, faintly.

"Do you recall that confidence?"

"No; no."

"O Alice—my own dear Alice!"

"I will recall no word of truth or affection, Gerald. I have said that I love you, and I may not gainsay it now."

"Alice! My Alice! What king—what emperor so proud and so happy as I? Alice! my Alice! I will love you so dearly that the life we shall pass together shall seem but the sunny lapse of one long summer's day. Who is it that has said man might be so happy if he would? That his only care should be the season's difference? My Alice! we shall be happier than that; for all seasons shall be alike to us, be full of the sweet sunshine of our love."

"Gerald Alton!"

Gerald started. The stranger had placed his hand upon the shoulder of the young man; but it was not harshly. There was a gentle smile upon his face.

"Come," he said, "follow me still; but no longer in the open streets. This way."

The stranger had opened a small, common, wooden door, in what looked like the wall of some garden or stable, and he stood aside for them to pass through before him.

"Come, dear one," whispered Gerald.

They passed through the small door. The stranger followed them, and carefully closed it behind him. At a distance of about six paces there was another door, which the stranger warned them of, saying,—

"Do not advance in the darkness. Let me pass you."

They paused; and, hand in hand, they would have been well content there to pause for any length of time; but they heard the sound of a key turning in a lock, and then there was the creaking of what seemed to be a heavy door upon its hinges, and there came a faint beam of light from the other side of it.

"Now go on," said the stranger. "All is well. You are safe."

"And, sir," said Gerald, "were we not safe?"

"I will tell you of that shortly."

The second door that the messenger had opened was of iron; and as he closed it, they could see by the light of a lamp, in a niche in the wall, that it was elaborately fastened.

They were in a narrow passage, the flooring of which was thickly carpeted, and the walls of which were covered with a sort of felt, which must have had the effect of most completely deadening any noises that might take place within the mysterious passage.

"Let me precede you," said the stranger. "There are other doors to open, of which I have the keys."

He passed Gerald and Alice, and soon they all reached some stairs, up which they ascended; and Gerald, as he did so, counted thirty-seven steps. He counted them rather mechanically than with any object in so doing.

At the top of these steps there appeared a door that was covered with green velvet; and above that door, on a bracket, was another lamp.

Then the stranger placed a key in the lock of this green velvet covered door, and opened it.

"Come in, and welcome," he said.

There was a sudden transition to the eyes, from the dim, artificial light of the gloomy passage, and the staircase, to the light of day; for at a distance of about two feet from the door with the green velvet covering, another door stood open, that led into a spacious apartment, the windows of which communicated with the open daylight.

But still the light was of a subdued quality, and only at the moment appeared bright and white to Alice and Gerald, because they had it to contrast with the dim radiance of the lamps in the dark passage.

The apartment in which they found themselves was of large extent—some

thirty-five feet in length, and about twenty-four in width. Three tall windows faced them, and they could see the boughs of trees—on which the greater part of the leaves still lingered—close, apparently, to the panes of glass.

The room was rather meretriciously furnished. It was a blaze of crimson and gold.

Crimson silk hangings—a crimson velvet carpet—and gold everywhere—on the ceiling—on the mouldings—and, in fact, wherever it could be at all placed, to aid the general effect—which was that of the heavily magnificent.

Alice was dazzled.

Gerald, too, looked about him in some sort of amazement as he said,—

"Where are we? Is this a palace?"

"Yes," said the stranger. "A palace is the abode of a king, is it not?"

"The king's palace?" cried Gerald. "Then the pardon—"

Gerald scarcely knew what he was saying. Some confusedly romantic ideas began to take possession of him—that the king had not only sent a pardon to Alice, but that he was intent upon making her some amends for all the suffering she had gone through.

Here the stranger smiled as he said,—

"We will not talk of that just at present. It will be necessary now that I should know what are your wishes, and what are your resolves. Sit you down, Alice Home, and you too, Gerald Alton."

"Yes," said Gerald, faintly.

He turned very pale, and then the stranger said, suddenly,—

"I had well-nigh forgotten. We must not neglect the wants of Nature."

He clapped his hands together twice, and on the instant a tall, narrow door opened, and a slim, pale young man appeared, and bowed profoundly and respectfully.

"Some refreshments for these friends of mine."

The pale, slim young man bowed again; but not a word he spoke. He retired at once; and in the course of a few minutes returned with a tray of silver, on which were sweetmeats, biscuits, small confectionery, and a crystal goblet, together with smaller glasses. This tray and its contents the servitor placed, with an appearance of great respect, on a table.

The stranger, who was attended upon with so much ceremony, made a slight sign, and the young man disappeared through the tall, narrow doorway, and softly closed the door behind him.

"Now," said the stranger, "you will be all the better for some refreshment. The soul will fight long and help the body, but faintness will come."

Both Alice and Gerald were in truth much in want of some sustenance, and they were grateful for the new life that seemed to be given to them by the fine, light Spanish wine that was in the crystal goblet.

The colour came back to the cheeks of Gerald, and he looked in the face of Alice with a world of love as he said,—

"Ah, my Alice, I never thought to taste morsel more in this world."

"It is like a dream," said Alice.

The stranger smiled, and in the rich soft voice that was peculiar to him he said,—

"We are such things as dreams are made of."

"But all this is not?" said Gerald.

He glanced around him as he spoke: and then he was somewhat surprised that he could not see the door by which they had entered that costly apartment, with all its gilding, and all its elegance and riches.

"Listen to me for a moment," said the stranger. "It is true that you have been rescued from death, Alice; but the king did not willingly grant the pardon which I exhibited to the sheriff; nor was it in such regular form that, under any other circumstances than the confusion of the moment, it would have been received."

Gerald looked alarmed, and flung an arm round Alice, as he cried,—

"Danger still—more peril!"

"I did not say that there was peril;

I am but explaining facts to you, and pointing out possible contingencies; and what I want you both to do now is to tell me, in brief, your position in life, and who and what you are."

"Ah, sir! have you thus befriended us, and do not know?" said Alice.

"Perhaps what I know is sufficient," said the stranger. "I would rather hear, from your own lips, the real facts. What is your story, Alice Home?"

"A short one, indeed, sir, with but one mystery in it!"

"Ah! a mystery."

"Yes, I was the only care, and apparently the only joy of one whom I thought my mother; but on her death-bed she, with many tears, told me she did not bear that relation to me; but that in a small leathern valise, which was hidden in a dry well at Corfe Castle, in Dorsetshire, I should find full particulars of my history. She had me carefully educated; and, at her death, finding myself alone in the world, and with but scanty means, I began to try to eke out a subsistence by teaching, and was recommended to Mr. Ambrose, the jeweller, on Ludgate Hill, to be governess to his two children. While there I was accused of stealing the diamond bracelet."

"And that is all?"

"Yes, sir, that is all!"

"Did you ever go in search of the valise your mother had mentioned?"

"Alas! no! I have had no means to travel; and, indeed, I thought it but the ravings of a disturbed imagination until to-day."

"And what to-day gave it the semblance of reality?"

"It was very strange; but a man who was in command of the constables who rode by the cart that was conveying me to Tyburn, told me, that if I would say where the valise was that had been mentioned by my mother on her death-bed, I should be saved."

"You refused?"

"At first; but the love of life, and —and—"

Alice glanced at Gerald.

The stranger smiled.

"I understand—go on."

"I told him. But then he only mocked me; and I found that I was deceived."

"The villain, Jonas Brand?"

"Yes—yes; that is his name."

The stranger rose and paced the room twice. Then he went to a small cabinet that was between two of the windows, and wrote something on a slip of paper. He touched a spring, and a slight sound, as of a distant bell, came upon the still air of the room.

Then the tall, narrow door in one of the panels opened, and the servitor appeared.

The stranger handed him the slip of paper; and when he had gone, without a word, after a low bow, the stranger, with a smile, sat down again, and said, quietly,—

"Now, Gerald Alton, your story."

"Ah, sir! I have none to tell. My father was a poor gentleman, who had served in the wars, and when he died, he left me nothing but his name, and a letter of introduction to Mr. Ambrose, the jeweller, who, it appeared, had married some distant relation of his wife's, my poor mother. The introduction and the relationship were both very slight; but Mr. Ambrose made me his apprentice without a fee."

"That is all?"

"Yes. But then I saw Alice."

"Where she came to teach?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now, Gerald, tell me: Was there any visitor of Mr. Ambrose's of rank, who seemed over-intimate with him?"

"None but Sir Bernfide Esperance."

The stranger nodded.

"That will do," he said: "that will do. Now I must leave you both very soon; but before I go, having heard your simple histories, I will tell you what you must both do in the time to come."

They both looked in the face of this man, who seemed to speak as though he was the arbiter of their fate, with curiosity and surprise.

"You, Gerald Alton, no longer wish to go back to the workshop of Mr. Ambrose?"

"Anything but that."

"And you, Alice, no longer wish to expose yourself to the serious chances of the pardon I brought to the sheriff being questioned?"

"O heaven!"

"They shall not—they dare not!" cried Gerald, as he sprung to his feet.

"They might, but we will foil them. You are now in a house, which has been supposed to be shut up for some years, in St. James's Square. Those trees that you see are in its back-yard or garden. Now, you will marry, and I will give you this house to live in."

"Sir!" exclaimed Gerald and Alice together.

"You both look surprised. You love each other? Well, you are both young, but I approve of early marriages. I will allow you a sufficient income with which to keep a quiet and fair establishment; and the only recompence I ask of you is, that you will inhabit the front of the house, and keep it like other houses; but never interfere with the back, and with a suite of rooms which are built out into the garden, of which this is one."

Alice and Gerald looked at each other in surprise.

"Do you hesitate?"

"Oh, no—no!"

"You accept, then?"

"Best of friends!" said Gerald. "How can we do otherwise? But such happiness!"

"Such mystery!" said Alice.

The stranger smiled.

"Now, you must excuse me," he said, "for I have work to do. Gerald, you will find books with which to while away the time here, no doubt. Through this door is a passage leading to other apartments. If anything is wanted, you have but to touch this spring, and a bell will sound, which will be answered."

"Sir—sir?" said Alice.

She rose and held the stranger by the arm.

"Sir, I do love Gerald!"

"Well."

"But—but—"

"What would you say?"

"Until I am his—until we are married."

"Ah! I understand you. Let me think. Can you bear the solitary confinement of these rooms for some hours?"

"Oh, yes—yes!"

"Then, Gerald, come with me."

"Dear Alice, adieu!"

"I am right, Gerald?"

"Ever right, dear one!"

"Come, Gerald," added the stranger; "I am pressed for time—you will soon meet again. Come."

For one moment Gerald held Alice's two hands in his. Then he drew her gently toward him, and for another moment he clasped her to his heart.

"I am ready, sir," he then said. "Pray pardon me."

"There is nothing to pardon. Follow me."

CHAPTER IX.

GERALD CALLS ON HIS OLD MASTER.

The more Gerald Alton thought of the singular events of the last six hours of his life, the more he began to doubt their reality.

That he who, at eight o'clock that morning, should be, with despair at his heart, beating his hands to pieces on the iron wicket of Newgate; and now at ten promised immediate marriage with the object of his heart's best love, and a splendid house to reside in, and a competent income, seemed to him all so vague and void, that when he stood in the little, narrow, gloomy street again with the king's messenger, he began to think it all a dream.

"No—no," he said. "It cannot be!"

"What cannot be, Gerald Alton?"

"All that has happened, and all

that is happening. I shall awaken soon."

"You think it a vision?"

"Of sleep. Yes."

"It is real; and now what I have to say to you is simply this: I have business to do, and will need you here again at sunset on this spot."

"That will be six o'clock about?"

"Yes, we will say six o'clock. I will bring with me a clergyman—who, armed with authority from the archbishop, will perform the marriage ceremony between you and Alice."

"Nay, sir; that can hardly be."

"The Catholic archbishop, I mean. Surely it cannot matter to you if you be married, whether it be a Roman Catholic priest or a Protestant clergyman who unites you."

Gerald looked grave.

"Each," he said, "is the minister of God, no doubt; but yet, dear as Alice is to me, and much as I would wish to call her mine, I would not propose to her such a thing."

"What would you propose then?"

"That I get a regular licence, and that we be married then by a Protestant clergyman."

"So be it. There is money. Only of one thing let me warn you. Alice may be named rightly, so far as her Christian name is concerned; but her other name is not Home."

"Indeed, sir!"

"The fact. You can avoid all risk of discovery by giving her any name you like."

"But would that be valid?"

"Quite. Pho — pho! You are full of scruples. Call her Alice Morton."

"Morton?"

"Yes. It is as good a name as Home."

"But—"

"But again? O Gerald, man of many scruples? Will you take my word now, that her real name is Morton?"

"I will take your word, sir, for anything."

"Then with it take this purse, and meet me here at six without fail."

The mysterious stranger then walked away, leaving Gerald standing lost in amazement and indecision in the little narrow street, that now, of course, he knew was at the back of St. James's Square—but that was all.

But Gerald would have been still more surprised and bewildered could he have watched the proceedings of the mysterious man who had befriended him and Alice so effectually.

Gerald would have seen that that man made his way to a small hairdresser's shop in the vicinity of the Haymarket, and that, merely giving a careless nod to the master of the shop, he walked through it, and opening a door at its farther end, went up-stairs to the upper part of the house.

He would then have seen, that in about ten minutes there came down again, and passed through the shop, with a similar careless nod, a young man dressed in the uniform of the Guards, and that that young man, with a calm and sauntering step, took his way towards St. James's Palace.

But all this Gerald Alton did not see—and it was as well that he did not; for he had quite enough of the strange and the incongruous to fill up his head and brain, without any additions thereto.

Upon glancing at the contents of the purse which the stranger had given him, Gerald, at a moderate computation saw that there were about fifty guineas in it.

And now a new and terrible fear came over the head of the young man.

"What is it that this man," he said to himself, "will require further to be done in payment for all this liberality? In what dark intrigue, or in what amount of criminality are we to be involved, perhaps beyond all extrication, as payment to him for what he has done, and for what he yet promises to do?"

These were questions as pertinent as they were embarrassing; and poor Gerald felt half inclined to go back to

Alice; and, placing her arm beneath his, urge her to fly with him at once from that gold and crimson room, and welcome any amount of poverty, rather than encounter the possible evils that his imagination began to picture.

But then, before he could take two steps towards carrying out this idea, he thought of the kindly looks of the stranger—of his soft and gentle tones, and he asked himself, "Where! oh! where would Alice have been, long ere this time, but for him? With the dead! Ah! no, I will not—I cannot doubt him."

Then Gerald made his way down the narrow street, and he found that, on passing out through an archway, and traversing another street, he was in a third thoroughfare, which led directly into St. James's Square.

Then Gerald knew where he was.

"Well," he said, "Alice has given a tacit consent to this hasty union. Be it so. I will to the city, and procure the necessary licence—which I know is but a matter of form and fees—and then I will go to Mr. Ambrose's, and bring away from my attic, in which I used to sleep, such things as belong to me, and bid adieu to my former mode and way of life for ever."

Full, then, of these ideas, and much refreshed by the light repast he had had at the mysterious stranger's house, Gerald made his way to that well-known matrimonial mart which lies to the southward of old St. Paul's Cathedral—a nest of legal spiders which has only even now been but very partially disturbed; and there, for a sum of about eighteen pounds, Gerald, after various ceremonies, purchased a licence under the hand of his Grace the Primate of England, empowering any ordained priest of the Anglican Church to marry "his well-beloved Gerald Alton" to Alice Morton.

This special licence enabled the marriage ceremony to be performed anywhere; and so different from the ordinary licence, by which it is compulsory that the ceremony should be performed in a consecrated church.

Gerald then directed his steps towards Ludgate Hill, the residence of his master, Mr. Ambrose, the jeweller and goldsmith.

In a narrow court, adjoining to Mr. Ambrose's shop, there was an entrance used by the workmen; and a door with a swinging weight and pulley led to a staircase, at the top of which was another door, to which the six workmen employed by Mr. Ambrose had each a key.

This upper door led into the workshop.

Through the workshop there appeared another door, which communicated with the house; and as it was now twelve o'clock, the workmen had gone to their dinner, and the workshop was deserted.

With some doubt if he had it, Gerard felt for his key; for he, too, had one to the workshop—and he was pleased to find it.

"What need I," he said to himself, "see Mr. Ambrose at all? He has not been over-kind to me: he persecuted Alice. I do not wish to look upon his face again. I will make my way silently and softly to the attic in which they have given me grudgingly a bed—which I have always had to make for myself—and I will just take my own things and my father's picture, and descend again; and they shall never see me more if I can help it."

Full of this idea, Gerald pulled the door with the swinging weight open, and ran up the staircase. He unlocked the door of the workshop, and let it swing shut and fasten itself—which it did so soon as he let it go.

The workshop was empty.

"That is well," he said. "They are all at dinner. I expected so; and I shall have ample time, and shall not require to give any troublesome explanations to any one."

Gerald was passing rapidly through the workshop, when his attention was directed to something glittering upon one of the work-tables.

"What have we here?" he said.

"Why, this is the very bracelet that poor Alice was accused of stealing, and which they said she had secreted in her music-roll. Why is it here, I wonder? for it was uninjured when produced at her trial. I suppose Mr. Ambrose don't like the looks of it now, and means to alter the setting. O hateful bracelet! you shine and glitter, and send forth beautiful rays; but you do not know the mischief you did, nor the tears that were shed on your account! O mischievous bauble, I hate the sight of you!"

As he spoke, Gerald took up the bracelet, and, with the unreflecting passion of his youth, he flung it on to the floor of the workshop violently.

Then something went wrong—or right—about it with a sharp, clicking noise, and Gerald saw that a portion of the gold-setting seemed to have split into two portions; and it was so singular that it should do so, that Gerald lifted the bracelet again from the floor, to examine how or why such an effect had been produced.

Then he saw at once—for he knew sufficient of the trade to see so much—that it was no artificial work that was in the gold setting of the bracelet, but a beautifully-contrived opening, which fitted so closely that the eye would in vain seek to detect it.

Lying within this opening was a narrow strip of paper, which Gerald soon possessed himself of. It was a very thin, white, silvery piece of paper; and on it, in old Italian-looking letters, was written:

"Adela Salisbury, married Oct. 5, 1735 (see cabinet right hand king's own chamber); died August 1, 1736."

"How very odd!" said Gerald. "What can all this mean, I wonder? Well, I won't take the bracelet, but this bit of paper, which is of no value—"

Ah, Gerald! of what value was the bracelet, with all its jewels, compared with that slip of old, thin, flimsy paper, if you had but known it!

"Of no value at all," added Gerald. "So I will keep it, and show it to our friend, the king's messenger. Pooh! I call him a king's messenger; but that is just because I have no other name to call him. He is—he must be—some great lord."

Gerald placed the slip of paper carefully in his pocket, and then leaving the bracelet which he so hated the sight of lying on the floor, and, indeed, giving it a stamp with his heel, which materially damaged it so far as regarded the selling, he passed on, and opened the door which led from the workshop to Mr. Ambrose's private house.

There was a long passage or corridor, the floor of which was covered with green baize. Immediately on the other side of this door, and at the further end of that, was the staircase that led up to the attics.

In fact, this passage had been made between his house and his workshop by Mr. Ambrose, that he might, without the necessity of going out of his shop, and round to the court, visit his workmen, and see what they were about, and give them orders.

Lightly Gerald ran along the passage, and reached the landing of the stairs One flight went down—the other up. The downward flight led to the first floor, and thence, lower still, to the shop—the upper flight to the attics.

Now Gerald had no intention of pausing one moment when he reached the stairs. His intention was to go to his attic, possess himself of what was his, and then leave the premises; but, as he reached the landing-place at the end of the baize-covered passage, he heard footsteps and voices.

Gerald paused, and looked over the balustrades.

Two persons were coming up from the shop, and the voices, as they spoke, although the tones were very low, came clearly up the well staircase to Gerald's sense of hearing.

"It is alike perplexing and amazing," said one of the speakers. "To be baffled in this way is beyond conception."

Then Gerald knew that the person who thus spoke was Sir Bernfide Esperance, who was so constant a visitor at the house of the jeweller.

"But," said the other voice, "what is to be done? If the king was moved to pardon her—

"Pshaw!" said Sir Bernfide Esperance.

Then Gerald knew that it was Mr. Ambrose who was talking to Sir Bernfide Esperance, and the idea crossed his mind that it could be of no other than Alice they were speaking.

He craned his neck and head over the balustrade; for he did not wish to lose one word of what they were saying on a subject so interesting to him.

"Pshaw!" added Sir Bernfide.

"But facts," said the jeweller—"facts are stubborn things. The sheriff came into my shop only half an hour ago, and said that a king's messenger had ridden from Kew in forty minutes, and killed his horse, to bring the pardon."

"A trick—a trick!"

"A trick, Sir Bernfide? Why, you cannot mean—"

At this moment they had reached the landing-place immediately below that on which Gerald was listening, and the jeweller opened the door of the front room on the first floor, and they both passed in.

The door was allowed to swing close; but Gerald did not hear that it was fastened.

"I must and will hear more of this," cried Gerald, in an agitated whisper, to himself. He struck his breast as he spoke. "I will hear more, at any risk."

Gerald slipped off his shoes, and tripped lightly down the stairs.

CHAPTER X.

THE GUILTY CONFERENCE.

Gerald Alton, without his shoes, did not make the least noise as he descended the staircase at the jeweller's house, in order to gain the landing-place of the first floor, to listen to the conversation between Mr. Ambrose and Sir Bernfide Esperance concerning Alice.

Had the conference of these two men been on any other subject than that one which touched so nearly his heart and his feelings, Gerald would have disdained to play the listener.

But where Alice was concerned—where her interests and her life, perhaps, were at stake, he did not hesitate, but resolved to hear all he could.

The door of the front room on the first floor had swung close to, within a quarter of an inch. It was a great risk to stand there and listen to such a man as Sir Bernfide Esperance, for he was known to be cruel and vindictive; but Gerald had no sensation of fear, although he certainly wished to get what information he could, and then escape with it.

He could hear the voices quite plainly.

"I tell you, Ambrose," said Sir Bernfide Esperance, "that there is some mystery in it that I cannot yet fathom, although I will do so yet."

"Well, well," replied Ambrose.

"It is not well. It is anything but well. Why, I tell you, Colonel Blanchard—for what reason I know not—took it on himself to solicit the king for her pardon."

"The pardon of Alice?"

"To be sure; but the king, as usual, was obstinate; and as the way of all others to make him not do a thing is to ask him to do it, as if you want him to do anything you must advise him not, why, of course, from the moment the colonel spoke, he was resolved to hang the girl."

"And yet—"

"And yet, at the eleventh hour a horse is killed to bring a messenger in time with a pardon."

"It's very odd."

"More than odd; and you, Ambrose, have earned your money easily enough."

"My money, Sir Bernfide!"

"Yes; I gave you a thousand pounds."

"Hush, sir! hush!"

"Oh, stuff! you had your reward, and the service has failed. That's the state of things."

"But not—through—me," said Mr. Ambrose, in a faltering tone. "I did all I could."

"Well, well."

"I swore to the bracelet after you had rolled it up in her music, while she was giving a lesson on the map of the world to my little Juliana."

"Villain! O villain!" whispered Gerald, through his clenched teeth. "O heaven! where is the lightning to strike such a villain?"

"Of course you swore to the bracelet," said Sir Bernfide Esperance; "of course."

"Well—what more could I do?"

"Nothing, nothing."

"Then, sir—"

"Come, come, don't put on that hang-dog looking face. I don't come here to blame you, Ambrose. I know, and I am quite willing to admit, you did your best; but that best has failed."

"I cannot understand it, Sir Bernfide."

"Nor I. But I will; for I tell you, Ambrose, that while that girl lives I stand upon a mine."

"A mine, sir?"

"Yes; which may explode at any moment, and destroy me, and all my hopes, and all my fortunes. I should have to be off at once to the Indies. I say to you, Ambrose, that that girl and I cannot be both above the ground together."

"Well, Sir Bernfide, you have said that before, you know; and, of course, it lets me know that you have some terrible reason for wishing her dead."

"I have, I have."

"Though I don't know what the reason is."

"Would you like to know?"

"Well, I must confess—"

"Ah," thought Gerald, "now I shall hear this terrible secret. Help me, Heaven, that I lose no word of it."

"Oh, you would," added Sir Bernfide Esperance, in a cold, sneering tone.

"If you please; for then, you know, I might be able to be of more use to you."

"Then, Ambrose—ha! ha!—then, Ambrose, there is only one condition."

"A condition?"

"Yes; and that is, that you would have to follow Alice into another world with your knowledge, for I would not endure you in this."

"Bless us and save us all! then I don't want to know anything further about it."

"As it is, you know—almost—too—much."

"I? I?"

"Yes, you, ... one must trust somebody. You say that the sheriff brought you the news?"

"He did, Sir Bernfide; and he was so frightened at the whole affair, that I hardly think he knew what he was saying."

"Like enough. Like enough. It was an awful scene. I left the crowd at the corner of the Oxford Road. Oh that I had gone on! But I wonder Brand don't come. I told him to be here at a little after twelve."

"It is half-past."

"So—so," thought Gerald, "I must keep one ear on the shop, or I shall have Jonas Brand upon me."

Gerald had scarcely uttered these words in a very low whisper to himself, when he heard the shop-door swing open below, and a hoarse voice cried out,—

"Mr. Ambrose within?"

"Yes, Mr. Brand," said some one; "but he is up-stairs with Sir Bernfide Esperance."

"Oh, all right; I am expected."

"Ex-pected—"

"Get out of my way, hound! will you?"

Gerald knew perfectly well that a door opened from the shop directly on to the staircase; and that, if he would escape Jonas Brand, who was always

quick in his movements, he had not a moment to lose.

Darting up the stairs which he had so recently descended, Gerald lay at full length in the passage above. Then he heard the tramp of Brand's feet.

The door of the first-floor room was opened, and Mr. Ambrose said,—

"Who is there? Who is it?"

"I," said Brand.

"Oh, Mr. Brand?"

"To be sure. Is Sir Bernfide here?"

"He is. Come in."

Brand entered the room; but he was more careful than Ambrose or Sir Bernfide Esperance, for he banged the door, which shut behind him.

"Now I am foiled," said Gerald, wringing his hands. "Now I shall hear nothing."

Nevertheless, although he was afraid that he would not be able to hear what should be said in the room, and which, now that Brand had arrived, would probably be better than ever worth the hearing, Gerald stepped down the stairs again, and reached the door.

He placed his ear close to one of the upper panels, and then he found that it was so indistinctly, and in so fragmentary a way that he heard what was said, that it would be impossible to rely upon the exact substance of it.

But he had already acquired sufficient information to know that there was a plot against the life of Alice, and that Mr. Ambrose had been paid a thousand pounds for his part in it; and such knowledge fell like a fire in the brain of the young man, and it required all his reason to prevent him from arming himself with whatever weapons the house could afford him, and rushing into the room with an accusation on his lips and vengeance in his hands.

Then, as he was upon the point of giving up all further attempt to listen, he heard the voice of Sir Bernfide Esperance raised so high that the words he uttered were as plain and distinct as if the door had been open.

"Jonas Brand," he said, "if you really have any information on which you can rely, you will be well paid for it; but it is of no use speaking to me in mysterious half-sentences."

"I know what I know!" said Brand, in as high a tone as Sir Bernfide's.

"A fool's speech!" cried Sir Bernfide.

"Very well, sir. Then the fool can keep his secret."

"What on earth do you want?" roared Sir Bernfide.

"A thousand pounds!" cried Jonas Brand, at least an octave higher than Sir Bernfide.

"And then you produce the valise?"

"No!"

"What in the name, then, of—"

"No!" roared Brand; "but then I will tell you where it is, or was."

"The man's a fool!"

"Very good!"

Gerald had just time to dart up the staircase, when Jonas Brand, in a towering passion, opened the door, and came out on to the landing.

"The man may be a fool," he said; "but he knows what he knows, and he won't tell it till he is paid. Ha! ha!"

Jonas Brand went clattering down the stairs towards the shop, with his hanger banging upon every step as he went.

Then Sir Bernfide called after him,—

"Stop, Brand! stop!"

"What for!"

"I will tell you when I come down, directly. Good day, Ambrose, I don't blame you. Good day."

"Good day, Sir Bernfide."

Sir Bernfide Esperance ran down the stairs; and he and Jonas Brand left the house together.

"Oh! what villany! what villany!" said Gerald. "What shall I do? Shall I go and reproach Mr. Ambrose? Oh, no; no. He would only raise an outcry; and as I am still his apprentice, he would just have me locked up, and then I should be, perhaps, assassinated by Sir Bernfide Esperance. No! no! I must be quiet; and I will take the advice of our friend, the king's messenger.

This was certainly the most sensible determination that Gerald Alton could come to, and he ran up to his own attic, as he had been accustomed to call it, and hastily began to collect together the few things he could really and truly call his own.

This was very easily done; and the articles all went into poor Gerald's pockets. Then he turned from the room which, poor and squalid as it was, he had a certain affection for—the affection of custom.

"Good-bye," he said. "Good-bye."

"Eh?" said a voice.

Gerald started in alarm.

"Who is that?"

"Me!" said the voice.

"Timber?"

"Yes; it's Timber. Who did you say good-bye to, Gerald?"

"Well, I hardly know; but, Timber, come here."

"Yes, Gerald."

Timber was a boy of about ten years of age. He had been found by the watch one night, when about three days old, it was supposed, among some shavings in a timber-yard, and taken to the workhouse.

An imaginative beadle had then thought proper to name him Timber, after the place in which he was found; and in due time he had become errand-boy to Mr. Ambrose, who was one of the churchwardens of the parish, and got him for nothing.

Timber was in that costume so well known in London as belonging to the charity school.

Yellow leather knee-breeches, very baggy at the knees and behind; ribbed worsted stockings; heavy, ill-made shoes; a cut-away coat of blue serge, with a leaden badge on the breast—which let all the world know that Timber belonged to the Ward of Farringdon Without, and was number 82.

"A muffin cap, as it was called—which was about the size of the ladies' bonnets of the year of grace 1865—completed the costume of the charity-boy.

"Timber," said Gerald, "sit down."

Timber sat down on an old tea-chest.

"Yes, Gerald."

"Timber, I think you love me."

"Oh, don't I neither!" said Timber. "You don't kick and cuff a cove—you don't wop a chap as isn't your own size—you don't—"

"That will do, Timber. Now I am going to trust you."

"Eh?"

"I am going to trust you, Timber."

"Oh!"

Timber thrust his hand deep in his pocket, but there was nothing there. A vague idea seemed to have arisen in his mind that the trust Gerald spoke of must be something connected with money, and that in his complete erudition it must needs be reciprocal.

Timber therefore shook his head.

Gerald smiled; for poor Timber had one of those ingenuous countenances which any one might read.

"I think you mistake me, Timber."

"Oh!" said Timber again.

"When I said I was going to trust you, I meant that I thought you were so much a friend of mine, and so kind-hearted, that if I told you how to do me a service, you would, and that nothing would persuade you to do me an injury."

Timber stepped up close to Gerald, and while a "flash of tears" was in his eyes, he seized Gerald's right hand in both his own, and shook it with a convulsive sort of movement.

Timber had no words just then.

Poor Timber! Not his cruel desertion in the wood-yard—not his stern, cold, rough, and unkind stepmother, the Parish—not the kicks and cuffs and hard words which the poor and helpless are "to the manner born"—not the sneers and jeers at his "uniform"—not the constant reminder on the part of Mr. Ambrose's servants and workmen that he was a "charity-brat"—not all these things had been sufficient to extinguish, blot out, or even blur over for one moment, the tender, gentle heart

that beat beneath that metal badge of his servitude.

Timber was a gentleman—one of Nature's own gentlemen,—if we divide the word, and think and believe that to be a gentleman is to be gentle; and gentle he was, as any young fawn in a forest glade.

"Yes," said Timber at last. "Yes, Gerald—dear Gerald; you—you never called me a 'charity-brat.'"

"No, Timber, never. I never thought of doing so."

"You—you never. Well, never mind. If you want me to kill myself, dear Gerald, I will be so glad."

"Not at all, Timber. But what I want to say to you is this—I am going away."

"Yes."

"I shall not be here ever again, I fancy."

"Yes. That is no, dear Gerald."

"I am going because of poor Miss Alice."

"Bless her!"

"Amen to that prayer, Timber."

"She didn't do it, Gerald, she could not do it. I was in the shop. I was cleaning the show-case when that bad man, Sir Bernfide Esperance, came out of the counting-house with Mr. Ambrose; and I saw him pluck Mr. Ambrose by the coat, and I heard him say —'Now—now!'"

"Indeed, Timber?"

"Yes! and then the poor young thing, with her roll of music in her hand, was stopped at the door by Mr. Ambrose; and his lips were white, and his eyes were all ways at once, and his knees shook, and his hair seemed to move on his head, as he said, 'Miss Home,' says he, 'Miss Home, I'm afraid,' says he, 'you have something that don't belong to you in your roll of music,' says he."

"You saw all that, Timber?"

"I did—I did. Then she turned round and she looked at him; and when he was forced to look into her eyes, he stepped back so suddenly that he broke one of the panes of glass in the show-case, and Sir Bernfide Esperance went and shut himself up in the counting-house; and then I saw blood on Mr. Ambrose's lip."

"Blood?"

"Yes; he bit it himself, you see; and he took the roll of music, and Benjamin Grey and Stubbs both looked on as white as possible; and he unrolled the music, and out fell the diamond bracelet. And then poor, dear Miss Home looked at it sadly, and she said, 'Ah! who has placed this trinket in my music?' But they have not killed her —she is saved—saved. Oh the great, good king! I was down-stairs, and I saw the sheriff come in; and I heard him say to Mr. Ambrose, a royal pardon arrived at the last moment for Alice Home. Hurrah!"

Timber, in the excitement of his feelings, flung his odd little muffin cap into the air—and being light and eccentric in shape, it floated away in divers currents of air, till it fairly went over the balustrades of the staircase, and so right down to the doorway leading to the shop. And it so happened that Mr. Ambrose was just coming up to the first-floor room again, when this charity cap—this apology for a head-dress—came sailing down the well staircase and lit upon his head.

"What? Murder! Help! What is it?"

Mr. Ambrose tore the muffin cap from his head, and then terrible wrath came over him.

"It's that villain, Timber!" he cried. "Holloa! you sir! Where are you?"

"Hush!" said Timber. "I will come back again. I must go down now, dear Gerald."

"Go, I will wait for you."

Timber went down.

"I am very sorry, sir. My cap fell over the balusters—I could not help it."

"You are sorry, are you? you charity-begotten, vile imp! If I were not too busy with other things, I would give you something to be sorry for, with a

vengeance. Be off, sirrah, and sweep out the workshop."

"Yes, sir."

Timber was with Gerald again in a moment.

"Now—now, dear Gerald, tell me what you want me to do."

"I want you, Timber, to keep a watch upon all that passes here. I want you, for my sake, and for the sake of Alice, to find out what goes on here between Sir Bernfide Esperance and Mr. Ambrose, and if they and that villain, Jonas Brand, hold any consultations; and I want you particularly to find out, if you can, if any further mischief is intended to poor Alice, and what they mean to do on finding I am gone and do not come back."

"Yes; I know—I know."

"And, Timber, you will always find me, when you want me, any evening this week, at nine o'clock, at the railings round the garden of St. James's Square. I know you can come with ease."

"Oh yes. They don't care where I go after the shop is shut up. You see, they make me sleep in the shed in the yard, along with Teaser."

"Teaser? Oh, I forgot. The dog."

"Yes; but he and me are such friends as never was known; and we have such long talks, we do—and if I want to walk at night, or very early in the morning, me and Teaser goes out over the paling, and on to the bridge, and looks at the river; and nobody cares a bit whether I'm in or out, so long as I'm ready to take down the shutters at nine o'clock."

"Very well, Timber. Now good-bye—I hear the chimes of St. Paul's."

"It's a quarter to one."

"Then the workmen will soon be back; so I am going off, for I don't want to see any one. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, dear Gerald."

"God bless you, Timber—my friend Timber."

Timber burst into tears, and sat down on the stairs to have his cry out.

Gerald stepped out of the house, and with hasty steps took his way westward.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ROAD AND THE COMMON.

We have not sought to mystify the reader. Sufficient for our story's strength are its own incidents. Plainly and clearly we show that the young ensign of the Guards, who was named Harold Blanchard—Mr. Sadgrove, who had the beautiful horse—the king's messenger, who brought the pardon of Alice Home at the last moment to the sheriff, and the formidable and mysterious Owlet, the highwayman, were one and the same person.

What the real and ultimate objects of all these disguises were, we shall perceive as our history proceeds. The game, suffice it to say so much for the present, was one well worth the playing.

It will be recollected that the Owlet disappeared in the midst of a mass of wild and beautiful vegetation in a woody district on the other side of the Thames, as Londoners who dwell on the Middlesex bank of the river are in the habit of calling the Surrey side, which has a ban set against it by all fashionable folks: that is to say, until some half-dozen miles are passed over; then the county of Surrey recovers its character, and may be endured.

It is the houses—the dense district lying close to the river, on the Surrey side, that labour under the stigma of being anything but fashionable, or even mentionable to ears polite.

But the Owlet was free from all the squalid habitations that always throng the shores of a navigable river. The copse, or wood, in which he had disappeared, was fairly in the country.

We will follow him through that apparently impenetrable network of shrubs and underwood.

There was a path.

A path that was just about wide

enough to admit of the passage of one person; and when that person passed along it, the boughs of the shrubs that bounded it fell over it and covered it up again.

It followed, then, that to make way along that path required an intimate knowledge of its whereabouts, as well as a constant pressure to move those same overhanging boughs out of the way.

But there was art in all this.

The path had been regularly constructed.

Not a bush or shrub of any kind bounded it on either side that presented any real difficulties. Everything that Nature had armed with spike or bramble had been carefully taken away.

The lilac, the alder, the privet—all harmless, stingless, soft shrubs, bounded this narrow path, so that, with the requisite degree of pressure, a child might have passed along it without a scratch.

It took a sinuous course, did this path, and it abruptly ended in a pond. But the pond was passable by various stepping-stones, that the Owlet knew well where to look for.

Scarcely wetting his feet, he made good a passage across the pond, and then climbed a fence, and alighted in a strange, wild spot, that must have possessed many beauties. It was a deserted garden—a garden that at one period had, no doubt, had all the care and attention bestowed upon it that were possible, but which had, for some years, been left to run riot of its own free will. Cultivated plants and flowers had reverted to their old wild condition. Winter's frosts had killed all but the most hardy inhabitants of the soil, but these had made the place all their own.

The Owlet trod his way through a perfect maze of flowers and fruit. And then he came to an open space that had once been a pretty lawn, in the centre of which was a small stone fountain, which had long ceased to send up a jet of water to

"Shake its loosening silver in the sun."

Across this lawn, the first glance of any one who should penetrate so far would fall on an irregularly shaped cottage. It was built of red brick, like the palace of Kew, and had many odd angles and corners, and old gable-ends, and fanciful windows about it.

In fact, it seemed a kind of architectural jumble, and differed as much as possible from ordinary house architecture in England, which consists of a huge square box made of brick, in which rectangular holes are made for windows, and one of the same shape for a door.

A pole was thrust into the ground close to the cottage. It was all awry, but a board was nailed to the top of it, on which was the following announcement:—

"This cottage to let. Apply at the lodge. Spring-guns and steel traps are set in the ground. Beware of the dog."

An announcement of such a character was likely to facilitate the active retreat of any adventurous person who might, actuated by curiosity, get thus far in the deserted gardens of the cottage.

But the Owlet had evidently no such fears. So soon as he had fairly passed the little dried-up fountain, he whistled in a peculiar manner, and then called aloud,—

"Drift! Drift! Ho, boy! Where are you? Drift! Drift!"

There was a rush of some animal through the tall grass and wild flowers that had made the lawn all their own, and then a deep-toned, baying sound.

"Ah! you are here, my faithful Drift!" cried the Owlet.

As he spoke, there bounded to his side one of those huge dogs of St. Bernard—yellow as a lion, and almost as large as one—a creature with the fidelity of a dog, and almost the understanding of a man.

The Drift, as he was called, was glad to see the Owlet, and fully acknowledged him as his lord and master, it was evident.

It was equally evident that Drift would have been a most uncomfortable personage for any stranger to encounter, who might have penetrated so far into that wilderness of a garden.

Accompanied then by the dog, the Owlet made his way to the cottage; but, just as he reached it, a low Gothic door was opened, and a young girl sprang out into the garden, and flung her arms around the neck of the Owlet.

"Dear, dear Harold, I have been so full of fears!"

"Fears, my dear Annie? What fear?"

"Oh, I hardly know, dear Harold. I have had such odd fancies!"

"Well, but, Annie, you know that I am likely to be late at times."

"Yes, yes; and still, ever since—"

"Since what? But let us come in—I have something to say to you, sister."

"Something else that you want me to do, dear brother Harold! Oh, you know well that there is nothing in all the world that I would not do or dare for you!"

"I know it well, dear Annie!"

The brother and sister entered the cottage together; but before he closed the door the Owlet turned, and spoke to the dog.

He spoke to him in much the same way he would have spoken to any human being.

"Round the house, Drift—round the house, Drift. Keep good guard, Drift!"

The dog made a slight sound, and walked majestically away, as though he would have said, "Certainly, master, I comprehend; and if any one disturbs you, it will not be my fault!"

With the hand of the young girl in his, the Owlet entered a small room at the side of the hall of the cottage—a room in which a wood fire burnt cheerfully enough upon the hearth, and which was rather over-furnished than otherwise with couches and sofas, and a great quantity of furs and skins.

"My dear Annie," said the Owlet, "this, after all, must be but a dreary abode for you!"

"Not so, dear Harold, so long as you wish me to inhabit it. I contrive to find occupations, although the intervals between your visits do seem long; and besides, I have not been here for many weeks."

"To-morrow, dear sister, you shall have a change."

"To-morrow, Harold?"

"Yes, dear; you shall go to London. I almost begin to think that the clouds which have obscured our fortunes so long are on the eve of breaking, and showing a clearer vista beyond them."

"For your sake, dear Harold, I shall be so glad!"

"And I for yours!"

"You think more of me, Harold, than you do of yourself."

"No. I cannot take that compliment to my unselfishness, Annie; but I can in truth say, that no fortune shall smile upon me that withholds its sunshine from you, dear!"

"I know that well, dear brother. But have you any news?"

"None that particularly concerns our main object, dear Annie; but as some suspicions appear to have been excited in regard to the house in St. James's Square, which I told you of, I have arranged that the front part of it shall be opened, and inhabited in the regular way by a young couple, with whom I shall hope to make you good friends!"

"Oh, that will be charming!"

"I hope so; and it will have the effect of disarming all suspicions and inquiries about the house!"

"And who are they, brother?"

"Most worthy, gentle, and good hearts!"

"Ah, then, it will be very happy!"

"I hope so, dear!"

"But tell me who they really are."

"One was about to be hanged this morning!"

"Hanged?"

"Yes; but I got a royal pardon for her, and she is quite safe!"

"But, brother—"

The Owlet laughed.

"Come, come, sister, I will not mystify you. The persons to whom you are about to be introduced—I beg pardon—I mean whom I am about to introduce to you—"

Annie smiled.

"That is more proper, brother. We must not forget ourselves, although the world forgets us!"

"Nay, the world does not know us yet, Annie; but it will not forget us, I fancy, when it does. The persons, then, whom I wish to introduce to you are most estimable, and will, I fully believe, act with us in all things!"

"Then they are welcome. But how much are they to know, brother?"

"That is a very proper inquiry, Annie; and I think they ought to know no more than that I am a Mr. St. John, and you a Miss St. John. So you will be upon your guard. And now, as I have work to do—for I want money—I will leave you until daybreak, when I will come here and take you to town; or, if I do not come by daybreak, recollect that I will come by about mid-day; for I have an early appointment, which may, by a possibility, prevent me coming early."

"Be it so, brother. I am, as you know, in all things your attached, and humble, and devoted subject."

"Hush!—oh, hush! Not even to these walls!"

"I will be cautious."

"Cautious ever, dear Annie, and silent as death itself!"

"I will indeed."

"Now farewell. Heaven and its saints guard you!"

"Amen. And you too, brother—and you, too."

The Owlet turned to a corner of the room, and bowed in a reverent style; but his sister at once stepped to that corner, and opened what looked like the door of a cupboard, and displayed within a regularly fitted shrine, with an image of the Virgin Mary, and the symbols of Roman Catholicism.

She knelt and prayed.

The Owlet bowed his head; and, for a few minutes, there was heard nothing in the cottage but the voice of devotion.

Then Annie, as she was called, closed the little shrine, and with a look of pleased serenity she said,—

"Go, brother; I feel sure that you will be under the protection of Heaven."

"And I too; for Heaven protects the right."

The Owlet pressed his sister for a moment to his heart, and then left the cottage.

In another quarter of an hour he was on horseback, and rapidly making his way toward Barnes Common.

Owing to the royal family being at Kew Palace, the route from there to London had become quite populous; and at all hours of the day and night the carriages of ministers and court and state functionaries were on the road.

By a wild clump of trees on the common, which had withstood many a gale, although not without being much contracted of what would otherwise have been their fair proportions, the Owlet drew rein.

He glanced upward at the drifting clouds, as he said in a low, soft voice,—

"Madame Luna will soon show herself through some of those rifts."

Strapped on to the crupper of the saddle was a small, oblong kind of valise, such as some experienced traveller might carry with him on a journey; and this the Owlet now opened, and took from it a something that would, at the first glance, have much puzzled any one to define.

But whatever that something was, he carefully placed it over his head, after pushing his hair as far back as it would go; and then, by dint of careful manipulation—for the something he was putting on was elastic—he dragged it over his entire head, and then with care pulled it over his face.

It was his owlet's mask.

So soon as he had it well fitted and close under his chin, he looked completely disguised in that fearful visage,

and as like a man with the head of an owl as it was possible to look.

Then he put on a half-mask, such as were then in use at masquerades (a then fashionable entertainment in London), and placing his hat and feathers over all, he was once again the highwayman ready for the road, or for any adventure that promised plunder.

"This is a strange life," he muttered to himself, "and yet it has its charms. I almost think that I shall regret it, even if the highest fortune to which I can aspire in this land should be mine."

He looked carefully to the priming of his pistols, and with a satisfactory "All's right!" he returned them to their holsters.

Then, just as a huge cloud sailed away from before the face of the sky—like some gigantic floating island in a sea of dark blue,—the moon, which was about half its course, shone out, and tree and leaf, and wild flower and grass, all became tinged with silvery radiance.

The grinding sound of carriage-wheels on the road that passed over the heath now came clearly on the night-air.

"That will do, no doubt," said the Owlet. "We will see what fortune has in store to-night."

He listened for a few seconds; and then at an easy trot he went down the road to meet the carriage.

There was a slight hollow in the road, which had been but roughly cut over the heath, and into that the carriage had just driven, when the Owlet trotted down from the higher road towards it.

He drew from his saddle a pistol, and suddenly wheeling his horse half round, so that he faced the side of the carriage, he cried out in a loud, clear voice,—

"Halt! halt!"

The coachman reluctantly drew rein; but the moment after he cried out, "Good Lord! it's a highwayman!" And he commenced lashing the horses to get them into a gallop.

"Murder!" cried a footman, who was behind the coach.

"Halt, or you are a dead man!" shouted the Owlet.

Bang! went the pistol.

The coachman abandoned the reins, and rolled off the box.

"Stand, Leo!" said the Owlet.

His horse stood still as a statue; and he at once dismounted, and ran up to the prostrate coachman.

"Get up, idiot!"

"Yes, sir. Mercy upon me!"

"Get up!"

"I am—I do. But I'm shot!"

"You will be, if you don't stand at your horses' heads and keep them still!"

"A wife and family, my good sir—seven small children, all under three years of age — I mean three small children under seven!"

"Peace! or it will be worse for you!"

"It can't be worse, sir, unless the next are twins! O Lord! O Lord! I'm lost! Murder!"

The Owlet clapped the muzzle of a pistol against the coachman's forehead, just between the eyes, as he said,—

"If you utter another word I will fire. Look to your horses, and be quiet!"

The coachman was silent.

"Holloa! Samuel, Samuel!" cried a voice from the carriage; "what is the meaning of all this?"

"Only a highwayman, sir!" said the Owlet.

"A what?"

"A highwayman!"

"Then take that, you rascal!"

Bang! went a pistol; and the Owlet felt the whiff of a bullet as it passed his eyes.

"Ah!" he said, "too near to be pleasant!"

Another moment, and he had reached the coach door, and tearing it open, he flung up the mask he wore, and, lifting his hat and feathers from his head, exhibited his owl's head and face, as he said, in the odd, croaking accents of a parrot,—

"Who is so tired of life that he will

throw it away on the folly of a shot at me?"

A lady who was in the carriage screamed and fainted at once.

A gentleman, with a pistol in each hand, turned very pale as he said,—

"The Owlet! Then it is true!"

"The Owlet!" replied the highwayman. "If you wish for another shot at me, take it, and that will give me two at you!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE BOOTY OF A NIGHT.

When the gentleman who had fired at the Owlet, and who still held one undischarged pistol in his hand, heard the extraordinary speech with which our last chapter concluded, he dropped the pistol on to the seat of the carriage, as he said,—

"No—I—don't want to take your life!"

"A lie!" said the Owlet.

"You villain!"

"Fire, then! You will not harm me; but your own destruction will be certain. Fire!"

The gentleman evaded the matter by saying,—

"What is it you want?"

"Your purse, my Lord Seaford!"

"You know me?"

"Your diamond ring that you have just taken from your finger and hidden, and your pocket-book."

Lord Seaford looked astonished.

"How do you know?"

"Quick! I have no time to waste."

"There, then; and as for the shot I have had at you, it was but natural that, when attacked on the road, I should have it, as you well know. I hope and trust that robbery is your only object with me."

"That is all; but yet you are in danger."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. You are looking at your second pistol; and you are thinking that, when I turn my back, you will lift it from that cushion and fire it at me."

Lord Seaford looked confused.

"Confess, my lord, that such was your intention."

Lord Seaford withdrew his hand from too close a proximity to the pistol.

"Take my money," he said, "and go in peace. You need fear nothing."

"Fear!" said the Owlet, in that strange, bird-like, croaking voice, which lost all its grotesqueness, and sounded only terrible from the owl's head. "Fear! Do you think I fear? No; I spoke for your sake."

"Mine?"

"Yes. You would have fired at me. The bullet would not have harmed me, and I should have turned and taken your life on the moment—for the act would have been a treacherous one. Beware! I say."

Lord Seaford was silent.

He handed his purse, he handed his pocket-book, he handed his diamond ring to the Owlet.

"You have all!"

"I have the honour, then, of wishing your lordship a good evening."

"One moment."

"What is it?"

"Since you have stopped me, and since the story is not a good one to tell, I would rather some one else had similarly suffered, to keep me in countenance."

"What mean you?"

"Lord Hamilton will in half an hour pass this way."

"I comprehend."

"Of course you do. And now, I suppose, I may go on without further interruption?"

"You may."

The Owlet slowly left the carriage door. Once, twice did Lord Seaford stretch forth his hand toward the pistol that lay still undischarged upon the cushion of the carriage, and as often did he draw back; for there was cowardice at his heart as well as superstition.

The Owlet did not look round.

That ounce of cowardice and that grain of superstition that were in the heart of Lord Seaford saved him.

The pistol was not fired, and the Owlet reached his horse in safety. His own audacity had saved him, as it had done on other occasions.

"To town! to town! Drive on!" said Lord Seaford.

The coachman scrambled, half dead with fear, on to the box.

The footman crept down from the roof of the coach, on which he had been lying at full length during the whole affair.

"I hope, my lord," he said—as he touched his hat, and tremblingly closed the carriage door—"I hope, my lord, your lordship don't blame me."

"I blame nobody. To town at once!"

The carriage drove on, and the Owlet had Barnes Common again to himself.

The moon had got into a ruck of small, fleecy clouds, which, although they did not wholly obscure its rays, yet had the effect of depriving them of their sharp, silvery beauty: a white kind of twilight was upon the common.

Then the Owlet slowly walked his horse in the direction from which, assuming Lord Seaford's intelligence to be true, Lord Hamilton would come; and soon he heard the grinding of wheels upon the loose, gravelly soil of which the road was composed.

But along with that sound he heard the regular beat of horses' feet, to a greater extent than was at all warranted by the pair of horses in a carriage, or even if there had been four horses.

"Does he travel with an escort?" said the Owlet to himself, as he halted some distance from the roadside in a clump of shrubs about four feet in height, and dismounted.

"Down, Leo!" he then said. "We must reconnoitre a little. Down, Leo! down!"

He touched the horse in a peculiar manner on the fore feet, and the creature slowly and deliberately lay down on its side behind the shrubs, which otherwise would have been quite insufficient as a place of concealment to a mounted man.

The Owlet knelt down, and rested partly on the shoulder of his horse as he looked through the bushes toward the road.

The noise of horses' feet, and the grinding of carriage-wheels, rapidly neared.

"One, two, three, four," counted the Owlet, as that number of horsemen came into sight.

Four officers connected with the court rode on, and then followed the carriage of Lord Hamilton.

It was not that these four officers formed an escort to Lord Hamilton's carriage, except accidentally. They would have felt their dignity very much impeached by being mistaken for such; but they had happened to start from Kew at the same time; and the pace they went at, and the pace of Lord Hamilton's carriage horses, kept the party together.

It is possible enough that his lordship's coachman was not sorry to have company upon the road, and so kept up his pace to the four mounted gentlemen; but be that as it may, the Owlet felt that the odds were too much against him, and that it would not do to stop such a cavalcade.

And so Lord Hamilton escaped the fate which his dear friend, Lord Seaford, so sincerely hoped would befall him.

Horsemen and carriage swept on, until they were lost in the faint light of the half-obscured moon. The Owlet rose from his post of observation, and called to his horse,—

"Up, Leo! up! We must wait for what good fortune may befall us yet on the heath. Up, good horse! up!"

The horse was on his feet in a moment, and the Owlet vaulted into the saddle.

No sooner had he done so than he became aware that two horsemen were approaching, at a sharp trot, from toward London. They must have passed Lord Hamilton and his friends about half a mile from where the Owlet now

stood, fully revealed against the night sky.

Those two horsemen were conversing eagerly; and, owing to the intense stillness on the common, the Owlet was able to hear very distinctly the voice of the one who was speaking.

His words awakened a new interest in the breast of the Owlet; for in them not only did he recognize an enemy, but he had heard something which put him in mind of what Alice Home had related to him in the few words that had comprised her artless history.

"Then, Jonas," said the speaker, "let that be quite understood between us. We meet at Weymouth to-morrow at sunset, and then to Corfe Castle; and if this should turn out of the importance to me that it may be, you shall have your demand doubled, although it may not be convenient to me to give it to you all at once."

"I can wait," said Jonas Brand—for it was no other than the thief-taker—"I can wait."

"Very good. Then I need not take you any further."

Not only had the Owlet recognized the voice of the officer Jonas Brand, but he knew that of his companion; and he said at once to himself,—

"That is Sir Bernfide Esperance, who hovers about the court, and bears no good character. A pistol-shot now would rid poor Alice at once and for ever of that fierce enemy. No, no! It would savour too much of the bravo way of doing business—clear away your foes by death! It does clear them away; but the method is not one that recommends itself to my mind. Yet I will speak to this man."

It would have looked manifestly suspicious if the Owlet had ridden away over the common after he must have been seen by both Sir Bernfide Esperance and Jonas Brand; so, instead of doing so, he rode as if going to Kew; but at such a pace that Sir Bernfide would soon overtake him—unless, indeed, he should take alarm, and turn off in some other direction.

But in that case the Owlet would have been after him, and Leo would soon have obliterated the distance between them.

"There is some one on the road, Jonas," said Sir Bernfide.

"I see there is."

"Who can it be?"

"The road to Kew is populous enough. I should say he was an officer by his mode of riding. But if you have any fears—"

"Fears? Pho! I never have any fears!"

"I was going to say I would ride on with you."

"No, no. Good night, good night. I have business at Kew, but I shall be in town right early in the morning. Good night, Jonas."

"Good night, Sir Bernfide."

"Double, does he say?" muttered Jonas Brand. "If indeed there be any great secret connected with the papers and the valise which Alice Home declared were hidden in the dry well at Corfe Castle, I will know it, and it is not two thousand pounds that will keep me silent."

"I must promise that villain anything, so long as he is useful to me," said Sir Bernfide Esperance as he rode on. "And so soon as he ceases to be so, I will give him an ounce of lead in his brain, or a foot of cold steel between his ribs; for I must be rid of him."

The Owlet had ridden leisurely on, and Sir Bernfide was rapidly overtaking him.

"A fine night, sir," said Sir Bernfide Esperance, as he came within about a couple of horse-lengths of the Owlet. "Do you ride to Kew?"

"No, sir," said the Owlet. "It is a fine night, however, for all that."

"Very, although the moon is capricious."

"You are right, sir."

The Owlet fairly wheeled round his horse, Leo, and faced Sir Bernfide Esperance, who reined in so suddenly that his own horse lifted its fore-feet from the ground, and pranced with them in

the air for a moment, as Sir Bernfido cried, "Ah! the Owlet!"

"Yes, the Owlet, Sir Bernfido Esperance; and if you attempt to escape, or to draw a pistol from your saddle, you are a dead man on the instant."

"Oh! ah! Well, I suppose—eh?—that I am to be robbed."

"The gold that at present jingles in your purse is so polluted that even I will not touch it; but from out your bad heart I will have a something."

"You—you want my life?"

"No; or if I do want it, I will not take it thus, except on provocation."

Sir Bernfido breathed more freely. He cast an anxious glance behind him; but Jonas Brand was far away.

"Your associate in criminality," said the Owlet, "is too far off to aid you. You are alone."

"Alone—alone, and with you?"

"And with me. Speak, and speak the truth, Sir Bernfido Esperance, or I will tear it from your heart."

With a bound, Leo was by the side of Sir Bernfido's horse, and the pistol of the Owlet was within two inches of the eyes of the baronet.

"What would you have?" he said, faintly. "What can you want to say to me?"

"You are the representative of the younger branch of the Morton family. The earl of that name—"

"Well, all the world knows that."

"You are waiting for the death of the mad Earl Morton, who for twenty-two years has now been an inmate of an asylum, in order to claim the title and estates."

"Because then the elder branch of the family will be extinct."

"No!"

"But—"

"I say no; and you know well that it is so! You know well that the earl's brother—who was a proscribed Jacobite—was married!"

"No—I—"

"Peace! Do not force me to any act of anger which my calmer judgment might denounce without enabling me to undo. You know not only that he married, but that, when he was assassinated, he left behind him a daughter."

"But, my good sir, it is of an earldom we speak. Daughters, you know, are of no use."

"There was a special patent granted in the reign of Charles the Second to the then earl, which made the title and estates pass to female heirs in regular descent."

"Ah!"

"Yes, and you know it well. The daughter, therefore, of the present poor mad earl's brother will be, or should be, the Countess of Morton."

"Well, sir," said Sir Bernfido Esperance, "since you are so well advised and so well instructed in the genealogy of the family, why stop you me upon this gloomy common?"

"It is well asked, sir."

Sir Bernfido made an ironical sort of bow to the Owlet, who took no notice of it, but added,—

"Are you prepared to admit the right of Captain the Honourable Charles Morton's daughter, then?"

"Oh yes!"

"At once?"

"As soon as that right is proved."

"Proved? How?"

"According to law."

"And you will fight the orphan, then, with her own property, of which you will get possession?"

"My good sir, what would you have?"

"I want a letter which was addressed by Captain Morton from Bruges to his brother, announcing his marriage, and stating where and how the proofs of it could be procured."

"A letter?"

The baronet with an instinctive movement pressed his arm upon a pocket in the inside of his vest.

"You have betrayed yourself."

"How? How?"

"You have that letter about you."

"Never. If such a letter had ever existed it would have been folly not to destroy it; that is to say, if you do

right in the motives and in the unscrupulous line of conduct you attribute to me."

"Yet you have it."

"No—no!"

"I say you have! It is no uncommon thing for some strange superstition, or other feeling which cannot be defined, to induce men like you to preserve documents which may be their destruction; and so I say you have such a letter, and I will have it."

"Not with my life!"

"You are a bold man to say as much, and see the weapon of death in my hand."

"I say it because I cannot believe that you would commit a murder in cold blood."

"You may call it 'cold blood,' if the words please you, Sir Bernfide Esperance," said the Owlet; "but my blood is warm enough with indignation, and so is yours with fear; but yet I will not murder you."

"It would be murder."

"It would after this parley. Before it I should only have called it killing."

"A nice distinction, truly."

So soon as he thought his life safe, Sir Bernfide could be cool, keen, and sarcastic.

"But," added the Owlet, without noticing the sneers, "you have a sword, and I will fight you for that letter. If I conquer you, I will take it from you, even though it should be half obliterated with your heart's blood. If you conquer me, you can claim the credit of having overcome the much-dreaded Owlet in fair fight."

"No, I will not fight with you. You may have hidden associates, who will kill me in any case."

"I am alone."

"How do I know that?"

"Look around you. There the moon comes kindly from behind a cloud to let you see the common. We are both alone, and no sound of horse's hoof or grate of carriage wheel disturbs the stillness of the spot. Sir Bernfide Esperance, you must and shall fight!"

"And if I refuse?"

"I will slash a cross upon your face with my sword, and I will skin you, but I will find the letter."

Sir Bernfide Esperance turned white for a moment, even despite his swarthy complexion, and then a red flush of anger, combined with fear, settled about his eyes.

"Come," he said, "since it must be so, I will fight. Shall it be on horseback or on foot?"

"On foot. Dismount!"

The Owlet was on foot in a moment, and then the baronet made one despairing effort to escape, by suddenly plunging the spurs into his horse's flanks, in the hope of, by a plunge, freeing himself from his companion, and being able to gallop away.

But the Owlet's hand was on the rein. He pressed the horse back on to its haunches.

"Your steed is restive, sir," he said. "I am afraid you accidentally touched him with the spur. Dismount!"

Sir Bernfide dismounted.

The horse at once galloped off.

"My horse is gone!"

"Your own fault."

"Nay—"

"You goaded it."

"But what shall I do now—on Barnes Common, and my horse gone from me?"

"You will not want it. It is a grave on Barnes Common you will want—not a horse!"

The Owlet drew the long, thin, straight sword he wore, and it flashed in the moonlight as he added,—

"Now, sir, come!"

"But—if I refuse?"

"I will run you through at once."

"Perdition seize you!"

A violent and frantic accession of rage had come over Sir Bernfide Esperance, and he tore his sword from its scabbard and made a furious onslaught upon the Owlet, who parried all his thrusts with consummate skill and coolness as he said,—

"Ah! that is as it should be. You

fight now—you fight now! and fight well too, considering."

"Devil!"

"No, no!"

"Fiend! if I only could kill you!"

"Try. Good, good! but that is a long way off from killing me, my friend. Excuse me calling you friend, but I always feel a sort of bastard affection for a man when I fight with him. This is the way. You lunge this way, you parry thus, then a feint, and then you do it—ah!"

The long, glittering sword of the Owlet passed through the body of Sir Bernfide Esperance, who uttered a loud shriek, and then, after beating the air with his own sword for a moment, fell to the ground.

"Good God!" he cried.

He tore up a handful of grass from the common.

The Owlet bent over him. He tore open his vest, and in an inner pocket he found a small book tied round with silk. He cut the silk and opened the book. A faded letter met his sight, and by the moonlight he read the address,—

"To our dear and most worshipfulle brother, the Earl of Morton—these."

"That will do," he said. "This is important for Alice."

Then he leaned over the prostrate form of the wounded man, and spoke.

"Sir Bernfide Esperance, are you dead? are you dead? Silence will give consent, and I will fling the body into the pond at the end of the common."

"No," said Sir Bernfide, faintly. "Murder! murder! murder!"

"Not at all. But it is as well you spoke. And now I bid you good night, my friend; and I have only one last remark to make to you. You will not go to Corfe Castle with your friend Jonas Brand to-morrow."

"Ah!"

"You hear me?"

"Fiend! devil!"

"No; if I were I would take you with me. Good night."

CHAPTER XIII.

ALICE IN HER NEW HOME.

The day that Alice spent in that magnificent apartment to which she had been introduced by the Owlet was the one most full of strange and varying feelings that had ever passed over her young head.

It was not likely that she would feel any weariness. Her escape from a terrible and disgraceful death was a theme for such entire congratulation and thankfulness that she could never tire of it.

And then the new sort of relation she held to Gerald, whom, in a few short hours, she had told that she loved, and consented to wed.

How strange and dreamlike everything appeared to her!

The room itself, too, was an endless source of amusement to her. It was filled with those thousand and one knick-knacks which wealth scatters about such an apartment with such lavish profusion.

There was one thing, however, which was not in accordance with any other object in the room, and which awakened the curiosity of Alice.

An iron gauntlet.

Such a gauntlet as a knight of the Middle Ages might have worn. It was placed by itself, without a fellow, or any indication as to whom it had belonged to, on a marble table.

Alice could not help regarding this gauntlet as in some way connected with her fate and history; and yet she could form no tangible theory upon the subject.

The whole suite of rooms—there were four—engaged her attention; and it was some hours before she began to ask herself if Gerald ought not to be back again.

Six struck by a splendid clock, ornamented with gilding, and a series of compartments beautifully painted, and representing Arcadian scenes.

Alice did not know that at that hour

of six Gerald had reached the little, old, wretched street called King Street, and was waiting for their friend, whom they only knew yet as a king's messenger.

And Gerald was anxious to see Alice, and it was a great disappointment to him that he saw not at that, the appointed time, the messenger.

But Gerald had not waited many minutes when he heard a rolling noise, and something fell at his feet which had slid off from the roof of the small outhouse just over the garden wall.

He picked it up. It was a stone with a slip of paper rolled about it.

On the paper were the following words:—

"Follow him who will lead. I am busy, and far off."

Hardly had Gerald time to read these words, when a small man, in a suit of very dingy black, passed him, saying as he did so,—

"I lead!"

"I follow then," said Gerald.

Gerald did not doubt for a moment but that the note came from his and Alice's friend; and he was assured of this when the small man in the faded black garments opened the same door in the wall that the king's messenger had done, and led him by the same route.

He did not question his leader, but he fully expected to be conducted to the same room in which he had left Alice. Such, however, was not the fact, for the small man in the dingy black, who had very much the air of a priest, led him into another apartment, in which a boy with refreshments was placed, and through a half-open door from which might be seen a bedchamber.

The small man in black made a slight bow, and left Gerald at once alone, closing the door very softly behind him, but not so softly that Gerald did not hear the lock slide into its socket.

The idea that he was a prisoner was not a pleasant one to Gerald. He glanced around him with some uneasiness, and then he saw, pasted on a large mirror that was in the room, a slip of paper.

This paper had writing on it, and Gerald perused it with curiosity, if not with contentment.

"Rest, Gerald Alton, and to-morrow you will see her whom you love, and him who is your and her friend. Rest content, and in peace and in safety."

"Ah!" said Gerald with a sigh, as he sat down, "it seems that I have no other resource; and yet why should I be discontented, ungrateful that I am for all blessings, and, most of all, for the saving of my Alice? Yes, I will rest, I will be content. I will contrast my present position with what it might have been even at this moment."

And Gerald covered his eyes with his hands, so as to shut out external objects, and his mind looked in, so to speak, upon itself; and he saw all that shouting, yelling crowd that was accompanying his darling Alice to death; he saw the officers mounted on those rough, strong horses, with which they could trample down opposition. He saw that villanous Jonas Brand, who made a point of doing all he could to quench the life of Alice.

No wonder, then, that many a shudder passed from heart to brain of poor Gerald, and that a radiant smile glanced through his tears as he looked again around him, and felt that she was saved.

"A life of devotion and love to her," he said, "and a life of gratitude to him who saved her. I shall be happy if Heaven will but permit me to spend the remainder of my days in such pleasant occupations."

Gerald was full of these thoughts when he heard a slight cough from some one who, from the character of the sound, evidently adopted that mode of letting him know that he was no longer alone.

Gerald started to his feet, and looked around him hurriedly.

Leaning on the back of a chair—his old, thin, sharp face just visible above it, was a man who, with keen intellectual eyes, was regarding Gerald.

"Sir," said Gerald, "I did not know—"

"No; you did not know that I was here—but this mansion is full of surprises. Be assured, however, that let the fashion of my entrance into this room be what it may, I am a friend to you, and a devoted servant to him of whom you were speaking."

"Of whom I was speaking, sir? I did not speak."

"Ah! You were not aware, I see, that the warm effusion of your gratitude was uttered aloud. Come, there is no harm done."

The man slipped from behind the chair, and then Gerald saw that he was attired in a long kind of gown, of ribbed black silk, fastened by a band round the waist, and that on the shoulders of this gown-like garment was embroidered a cross in crimson silk.

The slightly foreign accent, too, in which this man spoke, and the tonsure that showed itself amid his gray hairs, all betokened him to be a foreign ecclesiastic.

Gerald, too, from his figure and his voice, guessed him to be the little man who, in faded black, had accosted him in King Street, and told him to follow him.

"Well," said the priest, with a smile, after Gerald had regarded him for some time with fixed attention — "well, there is nothing very alarming about my appearance?"

"No, no! But—"

"But what?"

"I am rather surprised at your costume."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. It seems to me that you wear the dress of a Roman Catholic priest, and I thought that was forbidden in England."

"And if it were," said the priest, mildly, "it would be no crime. Oh! is it not amazing that man should feel anger at his brother-man for the manner in which he shall choose to worship the Creator, who is acknowledged by all? But that is not my object here. It is to earth, and to earthly objects and feelings, I must give my attention."

Gerald was silent, for the words of the priest seemed to him to be of too abstract a character to interest him; but he was soon roused from his inattention, or rather his want of interest.

The priest, after regarding him in silence for some few moments, suffered his lips to part into a kindly smile as he said,—

"Alice Home!"

Gerald started at the name, and uttered a cry,—

"Alice! Alice! What of her?"

"Ah! that rouses you? Well, it is of her I come to speak to you."

"Of Alice? Oh! tell me what? What has happened? She is well—alive—"

"Oh yes. She is both alive and well, and I thought that it would cheer your solitude if you could hold converse with her."

"It would. Oh! take me to her. Take me to her, sir, at once."

"Be patient. This room that you now occupy adjoins another that you have seen."

"The large saloon?"

"Just so. And this—and this small oval girandole turns on a centre, as you see."

The priest touched some spring in the gilt frame of a girandole, which was near one of the panels of the room, and it turned on two pivots, or points, at the extremities of its magic axis, so that a space was left on each side of it; and no sooner was that accomplished than Gerald heard the voice of Alice.

"Dear Gerald, I am so happy, and so glad to see you!"

"Alice!—my Alice!"

Gerald could just look through the small opening in the wall.

Alice stood upon a chair.

Then he put one arm on each side of the girandole, the edge of which was toward him, and taking the hands of Alice, he covered them with kisses.

"Dear Gerald," she said, "you have come back safely."

"Yes, my Alice; and we will part no more. God's blessings be ever upon you, dearest."

"And upon you too, Gerald."

"We shall be so happy."

"Yes; so happy—if—if—"

"If what, darling Alice?"

"If it be not yet all a dream."

"Oh! no, no—a thousand times! We are in the hands of some kindly and beneficent being, who is intent upon making happiness for us."

"We are in the hands of Heaven, Gerald."

"Yes, dearest, yes. Do you know I have procured the necessary licence and authority for our marriage?"

"So soon?"

"Ah, yes. Can it be too soon for us to be united, in the name of God, to part no more?"

"You are right, my Gerald; and after all that has taken place, I will not be guilty of the affectation of denying that my heart bounds with joy at the idea of being ever and ever with you."

"O, my Alice!—my own dear one—my first, last, and only love! How can I tell you what rapture—what exquisite joy your words bring to my heart? Dear, dear Alice—if all the devotion—all the tenderness—all the dear affection of a heart that will know no change—no change—"

The tears of Gerald fell fast. His voice was choked by sobs of delight. He could only press the hands of Alice alternately to his heart and to his lips.

And she too! Was she not happy in the love of that noble soul, which had already shown such devotion and affection to her? Ah, yes! happy—happy Alice!

"Gerald," she said, after a pause, "you know I am but a poor orphan girl."

"And what am I?" said Gerald. "Ah, my Alice! it seems as if, by the goodness of God, we two—waifs and strays as we are upon the ocean of society—were brought together to be all the world to each other."

"Yes, Gerald; yes."

"But do not let me forget. How and why is it, my Alice, that Sir Bernfide Esperance has so violent a hatred to you that he should even conspire against your life?"

"Alas! I know not."

"The villain! Oh, the time will come—and that shortly too—when I will force the confession of villany from his lips where all shall hear it. Alice dearest, I have been home. Nay, I will not call it home—I mean that I have been to Mr. Ambrose's; and while there I overheard such dreadful revelations between Mr. Ambrose and Sir Bernfide Esperance, that even while the words reached my ears and understanding, I could scarcely believe there could be such wickedness in the world."

"I feel that there was some fearful plot for my destruction; and yet I know not how I—a poor defenceless orphan girl—could harm those men."

"Nor I, as yet, dear one; but I will know, if I have to extort the secret with a sword-point from their hearts."

"But you will not—you will not, dear Gerald—court danger! Oh remember now that your safety is my safety—your life my life. Let those who are wicked, Gerald, go their own wicked way. Heed them not, dear heart; for it would seem now that we have escaped them, and reached a haven of peace and security."

"Yes, my Alice, it would seem so—"

"And it is so," said the priest.

Gerald uttered an exclamation of surprise, and so did Alice.

"You had forgotten me," said the old man. It was natural that you should do so. You are both right. It will be the task, Gerald Alton, of him in whose house you now are to discover all the villany which has been attempted to be achieved in regard to this young and innocent maiden; and it will be for him to point out to you the mode by which you may avenge it."

"No, no!" cried Alice.

"No?"

"No, I say. Gerald must not be an avenger."

"Not in your cause, dearest?"

"In no cause, dear Gerald. We will be content to escape the snare, and will forgive the fowler."

"We shall see," said the priest. "Speak not too unadvisedly. Heaven is the avenger; but if it shall choose to appoint human instruments, those human instruments so appointed must obey the behest."

"Yes, sir," said Alice; "but they must be very sure it is not human passion they are mistaking for heavenly commands."

"Ah!" cried the priest, with an accent of surprise. "So young, and so analytical. Ah!"

"Gerald," added Alice, "I wish to get from you now a promise."

"A promise from me, dearest? Of what?"

"That you will undertake no enterprise, either of discovery or vengeance, without my knowledge and without my consent."

"No, no!" cried the priest.

"I promise," said Gerald.

"It is indiscreet, young man; for there are things for men to do which, only to speak of, would blanch with fear the cheek of maidenhood."

"I have promised."

"And having promised, dear Gerald, I know that you will keep your word."

"In truth I will, dear, dear Alice."

The old priest muttered something which was too indistinct for Gerald to hear, and then he said aloud,—

"Do you know that, in doing what I have—that is, in contriving this interview between you—I have transgressed my instructions, and done wrong? but I thought it would contribute to your happiness."

"It has indeed, sir, and we thank you."

"We do thank you," added Alice, "with all our hearts."

"Rest then now content. Each to your chambers, and let sleep picture to you both pleasant visions."

"Adieu, dear, dear Alice."

"Good night, my Gerald."

The old priest closed the opening in the wall; and then, with a faint smile, he opened a tall, narrow door, which looked like a portion of panelling merely, and left the room.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DUEL IN HYDE PARK.

It wanted about twenty minutes to six o'clock in the morning, when Ensign Harold Blanchard made his way, in a sauntering, careless manner, toward the guard-chamber of St. James's Palace.

A change of the sentinels would take place at six in and about the palace; and a subaltern, who was on duty, was half dozing in a large chair in the guard-room.

A wax candle was still burning, but very low down in the socket of the silver candlestick. Its fellow had burned right out.

A thin, tall-necked flask of wine was on the table, and a couple of glasses.

The young subaltern looked very uneasy. On the entrance of Harold Blanchard he started up.

"Holloa!" he said. "Guard to be changed?"

"Not yet, I fancy. I want the colonel."

"Ah! ah! And at this hour. We all thought as much, when we saw that old Balriggin come here."

"And pray what did you all think in your united wisdoms?"

"Why, that a duel was about to take place which you know of; so don't be putting on an innocent look, as if you had no idea of such a thing, Harold!"

"Well, it's no crime, I fancy!"

"No. But if it is some ridiculous affair that the colonel has been drawn into by old Balriggin, it ought to have been put a stop to, that is all."

"It is no such thing, my friend!"

"No duel?"

"I do not mean that; but I mean that it is not a ridiculous affair."

"Oh, very well! Good luck to the colonel, that is all I have to say about it."

"Amen!"

Ensign Harold Blanchard crossed the guard-chamber and tapped at the door of the room beyond. It was immediately flung open, and Colonel Blanchard appeared, with his cloak muffled closely around him.

"I am ready," he said.

The young subaltern rose and gravely saluted the colonel as he stalked across the guard-room. Then the colonel paused for a moment at the door, and spoke in a low, deep tone,—

"Hargrave, if I should not be back within one hour from now, will you kindly speak to Captain Bissot, and ask him to take command."

"Yes, colonel."

"Good morning, Hargrave."

The colonel held out his hand, which the young subaltern grasped fervently.

Another moment, and Colonel Blanchard, with his supposed cousin, Harold, had left the palace.

"By Jove, I'll see something of it!" said Hargrave, "or there shall be more reason than I know of to prevent me. Holloa, sergeant—sergeant!"

"Yes, your honour."

"You can see to the relief. I am going out!"

"Yes, your honour."

The young subaltern hastily buckled on his sword, and throwing his cloak over his shoulders, he hurried in the direction of Hyde Park.

Colonel Blanchard and Harold had gone from the old Palace by the entrance next to St. James's Park, and were walking rapidly up the Mall, in order to cross the Green Park, and so make their way to Hyde Park.

Hargrave saw them in advance, and only kept far enough off that he might escape observation.

Duelling in England has already been condemned, and contrary to law; but there have been times when fashion dictated the hostile meeting as the only mode by which the disputes of gentlemen could be settled, and when duelling was so common that scarcely a week passed without an encounter, resulting in more or less mischief.

The back of old Montague House, in Bloomsbury Fields, had at one time been the favourite place of meeting; but at the time of which we write, "The Ring," as it was called, in Hyde Park, had the preference.

This "Ring" was a nearly circular piece of turf, so formed, and left by several paths and roads which surrounded it; and although it was pretty well exposed to observation, no one ever thought of interfering with the sport of gentlemen, if they chose to assemble there for a little diversion with the small-sword.

And it was the sword which was the weapon almost always in use.

Indeed, the decline of duelling, and its extinction in England, may be dated from the period when the hair-trigger pistol, carrying a half-ounce ball, came into fashion.

To meet your adversary with a sword, and so have a fair stand-up fight, is a very different thing from standing at a distance of twelve paces and just touching a hair-trigger. Men of courage shrunk from the cool sort of butchery which the firearms represented. The wound from the pistol-bullet was a double wound; it was one at the moment of its reception, and it was another at the hands of the surgeon when it came to be extracted.

The latter was the worse of the two.

But in a duel with the sword blood was drawn; and if the wound were at all serious, the seconds at once interfered, and there was an end of the affair. It was but a hurt with cold steel, and but little surgery was required—moreover, people who did not feel quite certain of their skill with the sword were careful of giving offence, whereas any man can fire a pistol.

Hence the adoption of the pistol as the weapon of the duellist, certainly in

England was the death-blow of the fashion.

But when Colonel Blanchard, of his Majesty's Guards, went out on that fine September morning to meet Mr. Charles Beauchamp, it was in what may be called by many "the good old times," when a couple of gentlemen coolly met in Hyde Park, bowed to each other, measured their swords, and then set to work.

Sometimes it happened, too, that the seconds made their bows, and just for good fellowship had a pass or two together, to show how friendly inclined they were.

Colonel Blanchard walked swiftly on, until he and Harold came within sight of Hyde Park Corner, where Apsley House now stands, and then he turned to Harold as he said in a calm, resolute voice,—

"So this will be the end."

"The end, colonel? What do you mean?"

"I mean that that young man will kill me!"

"He will do so if you go on to the ground with a resolve to be killed; but not otherwise."

"Yes; I feel sure of it. Blood, you see, will have blood! The time has come; but at least I hope—"

The colonel paused.

"What do you hope, Colonel Blanchard?"

"That the mode of my death will save my honour and my memory from reproach."

"Colonel Blanchard, you will not be killed by this young man, who has no right whatever to fasten this quarrel upon you, and who, therefore, must take the consequences."

"No—no!"

"I say yes. I cannot help feeling that I am in a certain degree mixed up with you in this affair. It was I who interfered at the moment of the death of Captain Beauchamp, and perhaps the advice I gave you then, and on which you have acted, may not have been exactly the best; but still, as things are, I feel bound to see that you are not killed."

"Sir?"

"I say I feel bound to preserve you by all the means in my power, Colonel Blanchard."

"I do not comprehend you. What possible means can a third person have of preserving any one who is fighting a duel? Nothing short of a personal interference—and that is too absurd to think of—could have any effect on the fortune of the fight!"

"I don't know that, colonel. We shall see. I had a very strange dream last night."

"Indeed? So did I."

"You too! Perhaps you will tell me yours, colonel, and then I will tell you mine."

"Nay, you mentioned your dream first. Let us have it. We can walk fast and still converse."

"Very well. I dreamt then about the duel, and thought that Charles Beauchamp had wounded you, and that he had his sword at your throat, when another person stepped over you as you lay upon the ground, and in a very strange voice, which did not sound human, said, 'Let us finish!' and in a moment had run Charles Beauchamp through the neck."

"Who was it?"

"I don't know; but the voice sounded like that of a parrot!"

"A parrot?"

"Yes, or a cockatoo, that had been taught to speak well. And from a glimpse—only a glimpse—I had of the face, that was like an owl."

"Dreams, dreams! what incongruities they present to us!"

"They do indeed; and now for yours."

"It concerns you."

"No!"

"Yes; in truth it does, although about as absurd as that an owl or a parroquet should come and take my side in the duel."

"Well, well!"

"I thought there was a bright light

like a fire, or a blaze of torches, and that I looked from a window in the old Palace—"

"St. James's?"

"Yes; it was one of the windows that look into the Colour Court, and who should there look from another window but the king."

"Ah?"

"Yes; he called out, Kill him, kill him! treason, kill him! on which there was a rattle of musketry, and some one fell dead."

"Some one?"

"Yes; and by the blaze of the torches I saw the face for a moment; and who do you think it was?"

"Go on."

"You, Harold."

"Ha!"

"Yes; I could not be mistaken."

"Well, be it so."

"But it was only a dream."

"And they, you know," said Harold, with a smile, "go by contraries; so I am not to be shot in the Colour Court of St. James's Palace."

"It would be very odd if you were."

"Odd indeed. But here we are."

They had reached the park, and at about two hundred paces from them two persons stood close to the "Ring."

"And there are our friends," said the colonel.

"Our foes, rather."

"But what is that yonder, close to the trees?"

"A coach, I think."

"Can we not warn it off?"

"Oh, it is theirs, most likely."

"True, true! Of course it is. There don't seem to be another soul in the park."

"Not one!"

Ensign Hargraves was at that moment drawn up, as thin as he could make himself, behind a tree; so that he escaped observation.

The colonel and Harold moved on to the "Ring," and when the colonel paused and Harold went forward without him, the burly form of Major O'Balriggin immediately put itself in motion likewise.

"The top of the morning to ye, sir," said the major, "and it's a mighty great pleasure, sir, to do business with the likes of you."

Harold bowed.

"Is it the colonel, sir, that's quite well this morning?"

"Quite well, sir. And Mr. Charles Beauchamp?"

"As fresh as a lark, and as swate as a daisy."

"I am glad to hear it, major. Are you, too, quite well?"

"Niver better, sir. Is that your coach beyant there?"

"Yes."

"Oh, thin, that's all right."

"Major, major!" cried Charles Beauchamp. "What is the answer?"

"Oh, bedad, thin, I was after forgetting. Mr. Beauchamp, sir, says, that if the colonel will say on his word of honour, as an officer and gentleman, that he was not with Captain Beauchamp in St. James's Square at one o'clock in the morning on the day mentioned, he will forgive him."

"Major O'Balriggin!"

"Sir to you."

"We come here to fight.'

"Good luck to you."

"And fight we will."

"To be sure. Give us your fist. You are one of the right sort, my boy. Whoop, hurrah!"

"What does he say, major?" inquired Charles Beauchamp.

"Why, my dear boy, he's mighty polite, and he says he'll see you—well, he says he'll see you blammed first."

"Very well, we'll fight."

"To be sure. Come on."

"Now, colonel," said Harold.

The colonel slowly laid his cloak on the greensward, and then took off his coat.

Charles Beauchamp did the same.

The colonel rolled up the shirt-sleeve of his right arm as he said,—

"Is it their coach, Harold?"

"Never mind it."

"Well, it don't matter. I'm ready."

The colonel stepped forward, with his sword in his hand, and bowed.

Charles Beauchamp did the same, and then held out his sword as he said,—

"Shall we measure, sir?"

The two blades were placed side by side.

"Not a shaving the difference," cried the major, clapping his hands together.

The adversaries bowed again, and in another moment the sword-blades clashed together.

Delight was in every feature of the major, and he slowly wagged his head from side to side in the intensity of his enjoyment.

Then Charles Beauchamp made a rapid lunge at the colonel, who parried it and attacked in his turn, but no mischief was done.

"Beau—beautiful — beauti—ful!" cried the major, as he danced round the combatants in the exuberance of his glee.

Then he ran against Harold, who—it would have seemed to a spectator—took some pains to place himself in his way.

"A thousand pardons, my boy! Bedad, I didn't see you."

"Idiot!" said Harold.

"Sir?"

"Idiot! I say."

"Bedad, sir."

"Oh! if you would like satisfaction—"

"If—I—would—like—satisfaction? Young man, before you are six hours older, or one hour wiser, you will hear from me in a fashion that may not be agreeable."

"Stuff!"

"What?"

"Stuff! I say. Stuff, major, if you are a major, and not some great, fat, awkward impostor. Why not now? Why not now? At once—you have a sword. Draw it, sir; I demand satisfaction of you. I know you, sir. A bully—a brawler by profession—a fomenter of quarrels and tavern brawls! Oh, sir, I know you!"

The major's face turned purple with rage.

"Draw, sir!"

The major uttered a perfect howl of indignation, and tore his sword from its scabbard.

Harold was on the defence at the same moment, and they stood foot to foot and face to face.

"Boy," said the major, with concentrated rage in every tone and every feature, "you have gone so far that you must kill me, or I must kill you."

"The former, if you please."

The colonel and Charles Beauchamp were by this time hotly engaged, and some blood was slowly trickling down Beauchamp's arm, where he had received a slight wound; but this altercation between the major and Ensign Harold could not but reach their ears and eyes, and, both on guard, they stepped back a pace to regard what was going on between the seconds.

"For God's sake, gentlemen," said Charles Beauchamp, "cease this strife! What does it mean?"

"Hold, Harold, hold!" cried the colonel.

"One or both," yelled Major O'Balriggin, "six feet of turf for one or both."

He attacked Harold furiously. His boots dug into the damp soil, and the grass was spurned from wherever he trod; and now and then he uttered an unearthly sort of yell of rage, as he gained ground on his young adversary.

Harold gave way step by step.

Step by step, in the direction of the trees, where stood the coach.

The major pressed on him.

"Hold, gentlemen!" cried Charles Beauchamp. "This is madness! What can possess you both?"

"You bleed, sir," said the colonel.

"Only a scratch."

"Look to your guard, then."

"Ah! and you to yours!"

Their swords again clashed together.

And still, step by step, did Ensign Harold lead his big and burly antagonist toward the coach; and when about ten paces from it he paused.

"Now!" he said.

"There was a flash of his sword-blade, a rapid parry, a feint, and then a lunge, and right through the broad chest of the major ran the thin blade, till the hilt stopped its further progress, and struck with a dull sound upon the bone."

"Gash! Ah! blood!" yelled the major.

Harold put up his foot and thrust the body off his sword; and as it came gleaming forth with hot blood raging after it, the major uttered a scream and fell dead on the green turf.

"Through the heart," said Harold. "That cry proclaims it. Now for the other!"

The coach door was at that instant mysteriously opened from within, and Harold sprang into the vehicle.

The door was closed again.

Once more had Colonel Blanchard and Charles Beauchamp paused and stepped back, each a pace, as the death-cry of the major came upon their ears.

It would have been impossible to feign indifference to the terrible result of the impromptu duel between the major and Ensign Harold.

And there stood the two principals in that already blood-stained contest alone together to fight out their quarrel, or then and there to end it as best they might, if it were possible so to do, without further strife; and had the quarrel been one of an ordinary character, had it been a dispute bearing about it any of the common characteristics of such matters, a few brief and conciliatory words might have brought it to an end.

But such could not be.

Those two men had met upon a ground of disagreement that admitted of no condonation. The colonel must either divulge the fearful secret which sat so heavily at his heart, or he must fight to maintain it.

Charles Beauchamp must either consent to let the fate of his brother rest in doubt for ever, or he must pursue this contest with Colonel Blanchard, who, to his mind, was proved to be the last man seen in his company before he disappeared.

And so they faced each other still.

And each kept on his guard.

And the blood still trickled from the wound in the arm of Charles Beauchamp.

"Sir," said Colonel Blanchard—for he was more anxious, feeling that he was wrong, to forego the contest than was Beauchamp, the challenger—"sir, you will perceive that we are now alone?"

"I do, sir."

"Then, if we fight still—"

"If, sir, say you?"

"Yes. I was going to say, if we fight still, we do so in contravention of all established rules, for we fight without seconds; so that, if an accident should happen to either of us, the other would be placed in an ungracious position."

"Sir, we began with seconds; and if those seconds desert us on business of their own, it is no fault of ours."

"Be it so, then!"

"On guard, colonel—on guard!"

Charles Beauchamp seemed to be resolved to bring the protracted contest to an end, one way or the other, now, as quickly as possible; and the fight between him and Colonel Blanchard took more the character of a continuous contest than it had yet done.

It was evident that whoever gave the next wound to his adversary would have the best of the battle.

Colonel Blanchard felt that, and the love of life came strongly over him. He fought valiantly. Once again he touched Charles Beauchamp with the point of his sword, and blood showed itself.

Charles did not speak, but he made a rush forward in attack.

The colonel parried the fierce lunge, and then Charles Beauchamp gave ground.

Colonel Blanchard pursued him too closely, and his foot slipped upon the damp grass. For an instant the sword lost its guard. Then he felt as though

a red-hot iron had touched him, and he was aware that the sword of Charles Beauchamp had passed through his right shoulder.

The colonel sunk on to one knee.

"Speak!" cried Charles, with the voice of an avenger, "speak! it is for my brother I ask you!"

"Killed—killed! I knew it!"

"Speak, I say! Where is my brother?"

"Help—Heaven!"

"You will not!"

"No; not in this world!"

"Then precede me to the next, where, when I come, I will yet question you!"

Charles Beauchamp drew back his sword, and was about to plunge the weapon through the heart of the colonel, when the latter, exhausted by the loss of blood he had sustained, fell flat upon his face on the grass with a deep groan.

Then with a rush, some figure, that Charles Beauchamp only saw for the first moment like a cloud or a vision before him, reached the spot; and placing one foot over the prostrate body of the colonel, the figure interposed a long, bright sword between Beauchamp and his antagonist.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DREAM REALIZED.

The sword of the new arrival on the scene of contest rang with a sharp, jarring sound on that of Charles Beauchamp; and as it did so, a voice—at once so strange and unnatural that it made Charles Beauchamp feel a cold sensation to his inmost heart—broke the stillness.

"No!" said the voice; "his time has [illegible]e!"

Charles [illegible]Beauchamp looked up. Wonder was the d[illegible]minant expression of his countenance. It was not a human face he saw bef[illegible]re him, but that of some hideous bir[illegible]—an owl—fearful in its shape and asp[illegible]t, and glaring at him from the larg[illegible] round eyes, which seemed to flash with strange fire, and to paralyze him by their gaze.

"Good Heaven! what monster is this?"

"I am he who avenges, as well as he who saves. Charles Beauchamp, your time has come!"

"My—time!"

"Yes; you would have slain this man. Those who slay with the sword will perish by the sword!"

"Who? and what?"

"It matters nothing. Look around you. It is your last look of earth!"

"Even as he spoke, the Owlet strode forward another step, and Charles Beauchamp retreated.

"Help! this is some fiend!"

"Now!" said the Owlet.

He dashed down the guard of Beauchamp; but he did not, at the moment, take advantage of his state.

"Craven heart!" he said, "will you die without a struggle even for life?"

These words recalled the fainting spirits of Beauchamp, and he rallied and stood his defence.

"No, no," he said; "I am no craven; and were you the arch-fiend himself, I would fight with you!"

There was a loud clash of swords, a cry, and then Charles Beauchamp fell upon the greensward, bathed in his blood.

"It is enough for the time!" said the Owlet.

As he spoke, he dashed toward the coach; and, springing in it, at once set off at a mad gallop. How it was guided—how the pair of powerful horses that drew it were kept in check—would have appeared a great mystery to any one who, from even a short distance, had seen that coach making its way; but an accurate observer, who might have been enabled to take a closer observation, would have seen that it was driven from the inside, and that the reins passed through the open front window, and were in the hands of some one within the vehicle.

And now that we have related the events of that blood-stained field of

battle, on which there seemed to be three corpses, it is necessary that we should pay some attention to the only other person who had been a spectator of any of the events which had taken place with such startling rapidity.

The young subaltern, Hargraves, who had placed himself behind a tree as closely as he thought he could venture to go to the "Ring" without being discovered, had seen, with sentiments of surprise and terror, all that occurred.

But until the Owlet had made his appearance upon the scene of action this young soldier did not think that he was justified in interfering.

No actual unfair conduct had appeared, either on the part of the colonel or on that of his opponent. It was still man to man.

He considered, too, that let the issue of the original duel be what it might, he could at its termination easily step forward and say, "I saw all this, and no one is to blame but the seconds, who for some personal quarrel of their own which seemed to have grown with the suddenness of a tropical tornado, chose to fight with each other.

But the appearance of the Owlet on the scene had altered the whole aspect of affairs.

No sooner did the young officer see that he made an appearance and bestrode the apparently dead body of Colonel Blanchard than he felt he ought to interfere.

To be sure he was too far off to see who or what it was, except that it appeared to be a man in a half-military, half-fanciful costume, and with a cap and feather, who then made himself the champion of the possibly killed colonel; but he ran forward with what speed he could make, shouting as he went:

"Hold, gentlemen! Hold! This must not be! Hold, I say!"

But the fight was over before he could reach the spot.

Charles Beauchamp lay on his back bathed in blood, and the Owlet was off away.

Such, then, was the state of affairs when the subaltern reached the spot of the encounter, and he at once saw that he could do nothing without assistance; so, on the chance of some one hearing him, he shouted aloud,—

"Help! Ho! Help! Ho! Help! Help!"

There was no response. Hyde Park was by no means as populous then as it is now. There might not, especially at that early hour, be any one passing for a long time.

"I must run to Knight's Bridge," said the young subaltern to himself. "I shall get aid quicker than by waiting here."

Even as he made this determination he heard the beating of drums and the clangour of martial music.

The subaltern cast a keen glance around the confines of the park; and then, winding up from the Bayswater Road, he saw a line of glittering horsemen.

"Troops," he said; "I will claim their assistance."

He ran in the direction the troops were coming; and when he reached a mound, he thought he should be seen if he waved a signal for assistance; and he did so with his handkerchief.

"Ah!" he said, "they come this way. That is well. I see the advance-guard opening the gates. They are about to cross the park."

Some gates that would obstruct the way of horsemen or carriages were opened, and the cavalry of the Guard began by threes to enter the park.

Then the young subaltern saw a string of about six carriages; and he knew that no carriages but those of the royal family were permitted to drive over the greensward of the park.

"It is the king returning to town from Kew," he said. "Ah, there will be plenty of help now."

The band, which was a mounted one, began to play the national anthem.

"God save the king!" cried the young subaltern. "Yes, it is the king; and here is the vidette. Help! Hollo! Help here!"

A couple of troopers rode up.

An officer, apparently despatched in haste from the royal *cortège*, rapidly followed them.

"What is amiss, sir?" he said to Hargraves. "What is the matter that you cry for help loud enough for his majesty to hear you?"

"It is not for myself. You see I am in the service."

"The Coldstreams, I think."

"Yes, sir. Yes, Colonel—"

"General."

"I beg pardon—I am so confused."

"An officer, sir, should never be confused."

"Pardon me, sir—even you would, if you had seen what I have. But that is not the question. Yonder lies Colonel Blanchard—killed, I think. By his side, nearly, lies a gentleman who has fought with him; and further on lies Major O'Balriggin—killed, I think, and I should not be at all surprised to find Ensign Harold Blanchard lying somewhere in the same condition."

"Then, sir," said the general, "it appears to me that there has been a wholesale slaughter, and that I may congratulate you upon being the only survivor."

"No, sir—no. I had nothing to do with it."

By this time the carriages of the king and his suite had reached the spot, and another officer rode up and said,—

"His majesty wants to know what has happened."

"This young gentleman seems to know all about it," said the first officer. "It's a serious affair, I fancy—some mad-headed duel."

"Indeed, general."

"Yes. First file dismount. Follow me."

The general dismounted himself, and a trooper took charge of his horse, while he and a file of men went forward to where the bodies of Colonel Blanchard and Charles Beauchamp were lying.

Then his Most Gracious Majesty King George III. thrust his head out of the carriage window, with all that impetuosity which was incidental to him, and called out, in those unmistakable tones of royalty,—

"Eh! What? What is it? Eh? Murder! No. Yes. Eh? Who is it? What is it?"

"Come and answer his majesty," said the second officer. "You are in the Guard?"

"Yes—the Coldstreams."

"Come on, then."

Hargraves was in another moment executing a very low bow at the carriage window of the king.

"Well, what, eh? Speak out. Dumb, eh? Are you deaf and dumb? Can't you say, eh? What is it?"

"Please your majesty, a duel."

"Eh—what? Now. Look sharp Stray shots—might come this way — pop! bang! you know, and there's an end of us—eh?"

"Gott gracious!" said the queen.

"Duel! Duel! Eh? Where? Keep our head out of the way—eh?"

"The duel is unfortunately over, may it please your majesty."

"Unfortunately—eh? A good job. No more stray shots—bang! Pop! and away you go. Eh?"

"And I fear, your majesty, that four persons are killed."

"What?" roared the king. "Four—four?"

"Yes, your majesty."

"Drive on—drive on! Don't like the sound of it! Do you hear, Charlotte? Four persons killed. Might kill us. Drive on!"

"Gott gracious!" said the queen.

At this moment the general officer who had been first sent to know what was amiss, and who had dismounted to make his own observations, came up to the carriage door and said,—

"May it please your majesty, Colonel Blanchard, of your majesty's Guards, is badly wounded."

"What—eh? What, our Colonel Blanchard? Owes me a guinea, I think—somebody owes me a guinea."

"But he is not killed, your majesty.

Then a young gentleman is just alive, and no more, who appears to have fought with him."

"Rascal—rascal! Eh? Serve him right."

"And, your majesty, a Major O'Bairiggin, unattached, is killed outright."

"What—what—what?"

"That is all, your majesty."

"All—all! Enough too, we think—enough too. Eh, Charlotte?"

"Mine Gott!" Yes!" said the queen.

"Take them up. Bury the wounded, and send the dead to the hospital or somewhere; no, I mean—bless me!—the dead—what do I mean?"

"I have seen to all that, your majesty."

"Very well. Drive on, then—drive on."

"But, your majesty," said Hargraves, "I have the most curious part of the whole affair yet to relate to your majesty."

"Eh, what? Stop—stop! What is it?"

"I had nothing to do with the duel, your majesty; but suspecting one was about to take place, I followed the colonel and his second, and I saw that the colonel was down, and that another person came, and fought and killed his opponent."

"Who—who? Eh?"

"I don't know, your majesty."

"This note, your majesty," said an officer, "has been placed in the hands of one of the escort by a man on a black horse, who then rode away at a prodigious pace toward the country."

"What—what?"

"It is addressed, 'To the eyes of all whom it may concern.'"

"Odd address—very odd! Open it—open it, general; open it at once. Well—well!"

The general opened the note, and read aloud:—

"If the mysteries of this morning require elucidation, the Owlet will be happy to make them clear."

"The what?"

"The Owlet."

"Drive on!" roared the king; drive on at once. The Owlet! No—no! Don't want him to make anything clear; too clear by half. Drive on! Murder! Don't want anything elucidated! What—what—what? Rascal—great rascal! Go on at once."

The royal postillions cracked their whips, and the carriages traversed the greensward of Hyde Park at a rapid pace.

But the general remained behind, and with the assistance of about a dozen of the soldiers, and some of the bundles, which were abundant in the park, a couple of rude litters were made; and Colonel Blanchard was placed on one and conveyed to St. James's Place."

On the other was placed Charles Beauchamp, and carried to an address which was found on his cards in his pocket.

The colonel was in a deep swoon when he was placed in his own rooms adjoining the guard-chamber, and the surgeons of the regiment were soon with him.

Then, as if nothing very particular had happened, young Hargraves sat down in the guard-chamber, and called to the orderly sergeant, saying,—

"Has Mr. Harold Blanchard come back?"

"No, sir."

"When he does, say to him that I must speak to him at once."

"Yes, your honour."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MARRIAGE AT ST. JAMES'S SQUARE.

It was about one hour past noon on the morning after his mysterious lodgment in the house in St. James's Square, that the tall, narrow door in the wainscot opened into the room that Gerald Alton occupied, and the mysterious man, whom he only knew as yet as the messenger of pardon to Alice, entered the apartment.

There was a frank and cordial smile upon this person's face as he said, in his quiet, gentle way,—

"I owe you apologies, Gerald, for seeming neglect of you; but in reality I was engaged on business of yours."

"Of mine, dear sir?"

"Well, of Alice's; and I fancy I may call that business of yours—may I not?"

"Oh yes—yes! There is nothing that can concern her that does not lie very close to my heart."

"Of course—of course. And now I have something to ask of you before I communicate to you the information I have become possessed of."

"My whole heart and mind are open to you. I will answer you frankly, ask me what you will; for I feel assured that you are the sincerest of friends."

"It is well," replied the Owlet. "It is well indeed that you should have that assurance, for it is one that may stand you in good stead in the time that is to come, Gerald Alton."

"I have but one hope in the time that is to come," said Gerald, with kindling enthusiasm, "and *that* is, that I may be spared to Alice and Alice spared to me. Oh, sir, if I could but look forward to the felicity of residing in some humble home, some lowly cottage nestled in roses, and with, perchance, a rippling stream to carry on its breast the shedding leaflets, with Alice by my hearth, how happy, happy I should be!"

"Then your tastes are not for admixture with the great world about you?"

"Ah, no—no. I would tend, perchance, a few sheep; I would be cunning and curious about plants and flowers; and the wild birds should all know that our little domain was a shelter and a home for them from all perils. The slant rays of the setting sun would close my day, and I should rest in peace; its earliest beams would rouse me to a new day of calm delight. I would sigh for nothing else."

"And would you be heedless of the war of interests about you?—of the politics of Europe, of the world?"

"All heedless should I be while they left me peace and love."

"Peace and love," said the Owlet, as he paced the room twice. "Peace and love. I had peace and love. But now—now! Oh, hush, proud heart! It may not be. The strife for power—the war of factions. Well. It is well. I, too, have had such dreams of Arcadian simplicity and serenity."

Then he turned abruptly to Gerald as he said, with a faint smile,—

"Why, my dear friend, you would be a monarch in your home of delight. You would need to be addressed as a serene highness."

Gerald smiled.

"I have heard that title ill-bestowed upon the most restless minds the world ever saw. But I am sincere in what I say."

The Owlet smiled again, and laid his hand in a kindly manner upon the shoulder of Gerald, as he said, gently,—

"I don't think, my young friend, that there are ten years of age between us; but during those ten years I have drunk deep draughts of the world's philosophy, and I can tell you that you dream of a Utopia which, in this world, is not to be discovered by any voyager. No, Gerald, we are all of the world, worldly, and we must play our parts in the great drama of existence."

"Indeed, sir."

"Yes; and it is not permitted that any of us should have the power to stand aside, and say we will only be spectators."

Gerald sighed.

"But be comforted. As happy a destiny as that which you have pictured to yourself—at least, as serene a one—may be yours, and yet you may fulfil the *rôle* of your existence."

"I will hope so."

"And now tell me, have you, of yourself, nothing to add to the simple story of your life and of your love?"

"Nothing—nothing."

"And, to the best of your belief, has

Alice nothing in the way of mystery to add to her recital?"

"Nothing—nothing. Ah! you do not know her. She has no secret chambers in her brain in which to hoard up mysteries. Her mind is like one of those flowers, so simple in its organization, that at the first gleam of kindly sunshine it opens all its sweetness to the balmy influence."

"It is well. Let me think. And yet why should I be hidden and secret? I have something to tell you, Gerald, of Alice."

"Of Alice? Of my Alice?"

"Even so."

"Then let me hear it. Let it be told in her presence."

"Nay; it is no charge against her."

"I did not for one moment dream it was, sir. If there be anything that I know not about dear Alice, it must be something that, like fresh fragrance to the rose, can only add new lustre to her excellence."

"O faith! faith! what a glorious heritage art thou!" exclaimed the Owlet.

"Yes! I have faith in Alice."

"And I too, my friend. We will go to her. Come; no doubt she will be found in her own apartment. Follow me."

It was with eager steps that Gerald followed the mysterious man through the tall, narrow door in the panel; and, with a cry of joy, he was soon aware that he was in the large and costly room to which he had been at first introduced in that mansion, and Alice advanced from one of the deep recessed windows to meet him. "Dear Gerald!"

"My Alice!"

The Owlet smiled.

"Come," he said, "to business; unless, indeed, you will tell me that the only business of such young hearts as yours is to love."

"Nay, sir," said Gerald, "we will attend to you."

"Then, Alice," said the Owlet, "I have, in a few brief words, to tell you who and what you are."

"Ah, sir—"

"But I will love you still," said Gerald.

The Owlet smiled again.

"There were two fair sisters, Alice," he said, "who belonged to a once very rich and very haughty noble family, although it had met reverses in the many social, and political, and religious revolutions of England. One of those sisters married a king's son. The other married the brother of an earl. But the earl himself was married."

"What earl, sir? Will you not give us names?" said Gerald.

"I will. The earl was the Earl of Morton; and it was the younger sister who was married to his brother, who was named Captain the Honourable John Morton."

"And the sister who married the king's son?"

"We have nothing to do at present with that part of the family. It is of this sister who was wedded to the earl's brother I would speak."

"We listen, sir."

"The earl himself was married, and three children of his stood in the way of the succession of his brother to the title and estates. The brother then, feeling that he was shut out from all hope in that quarter, went abroad, and died in an obscure skirmish between the Turks and the Moldavians. His infant daughter he had left in England with a faithful servant."

"But the wife—the mother?" said Alice.

"She had died young. The child was an orphan; and it so happened that within one month of her orphanage a contagious disorder swept away the three children and the wife of the Earl of Morton, leaving him a widowed and childless man. His mind sunk under these calamities; and before he could take any steps about his affairs, he became lost to this world in permanent insanity."

"Does this poor earl still live?"

"He does. Then a branch of his wife's family, represented by a man

named Esperance—Sir Bernfide Esperance—set up a claim to the care of the lunatic earl and his vast possessions. Court interest favoured him, and he is now in actual possession of the estates that belong to the brother's daughter—for the grants of nobility carry the titles to heirs female, and the titles carry the estates."

"And what became of her?" said Gerald.

"Her life was thrice attempted by Sir Bernfide Esperance, and the faithful servant became so alarmed for the safety of her charge, that she concealed, even from the girl herself, the secret of her birth and rights; and having many documents which would fully prove her case, she carefully hid them, fancying that nothing could be done, or ought to be done, until the child was one-and-twenty years of age.

"O Heaven!" cried Alice.

"You begin to see?"

"I do—I do—"

Gerald turned very pale.

"She hid these documents," added the Owlet, "in a small valise, and flung it, with its precious contents, into a deep-dug well."

"At Corfe Castle, in Dorsetshire?" exclaimed Alice.

"Yes."

"Then, then, O Gerald!"

"Alice! Alice!"

"You are the child," said the Owlet; "you are the daughter of that noble lady and of the brother of the Earl of Morton. It is your life that Sir Bernfide Esperance has sought."

"And then," faltered Gerald, "Alice is—is—"

"The Countess of Morton in her own right, so soon as the breath of life has departed from the poor mad earl, her uncle."

"Good heavens! O Alice!—no, I mean Lady—"

"Gerald."

Alice went towards him and placed a hand on each of his shoulders.

"My Gerald, am I not still your Alice? Do you reject me now?"

"Reject—you—you, Alice, who are noble—high—great—rich—"

"And yet your Alice, who will love you all the same."

A flush of tears came to Gerald's eyes.

The Owlet spoke in a tone that showed that he was fully amenable to human emotion.

"You will now comprehend," he said, "why it was that the vile plot was formed against your life by the accusation of stealing the diamond bracelet, which the stern and bloodthirsty laws of England make a capital offence."

"Oh yes, yes; I am so innocent. I did not take it. I did not dream of such a thing."

Alice sobbed aloud.

"Be comforted. Heaven will work in its own way, dear girl. Avengers will arise. They have arisen."

"They have indeed," cried Gerald, as his cheek flushed and his eyes sparkled. "I will not sleep—I will not eat, drink, nor rest until I have met that man face to face, and charged him with his villany. I can, too, corroborate all this. I have heard it all. Listen to me, you, dear sir; and you, my Alice, listen!"

"You have some news, then," said the Owlet.

"I have—I have."

Gerald then related the particulars of his visit to the jeweller's workshop, and the conversation he had overheard between Mr. Ambrose and Sir Bernfide Esperance. And then he sprang to his feet, saying,—

"Oh, sir, lend me or give me a sword, and let me at once seek out that man."

"He has been sought."

"Sir?"

"And you are avenged."

"Avenged? How?"

"He may be picked up by now; but the last I of saw him was lying in his blood on Barnes Common; my sword placed him, for a time at least, out of the way of doing active mischief."

"Oh, sir, how can I thank you?"

"Is he dead?" said Alice.

"I know not; but I got from him

this letter, which is from your father, dear child, to his brother the earl, and which contains an account of his marriage with mother—and so is valuable collateral evidence."

"My poor father!" sobbed Alice.

The Owlet handed her the letter, and her tears fell on the faded writing.

"Sir—sir! will you let me keep this?"

"It is yours. I am glad to be able to place such a document in your hands; and now that you know who and what you are, will you still wed this jeweller's apprentice?"

Alice smiled and held out her hand to Gerald. The tone in which the Owlet had spoken was not an unkind one, although the words made Gerald redden to the roots of his hair.

"Ought I—ought—" he said, in a half-choked voice—"ought I to take to myself this fair hand, which would be a prize for the highest and noblest?"

"Ah, Gerald!" said Alice, "will you even now refuse me? You do not love me?"

"Alice! Alice! What dreadful words!"

"Come, come," added the Owlet. "That is all managed. Let us have no coquetting. Your name now is Alice Morton. So if Gerald has the requisite papers, your marriage can take place this day, and I will put you into formal possession of this house—or, at least, of that part of it which you will please to inhabit."

"And we shall owe all this happiness to you, sir," said Gerald. "Oh, how can we repay you!"

"You can be of great service to me by inhabiting this house as Mr. and Mrs. Alton, which I wish you, for the present, just to call yourselves; and if any inquiries are made here, you will be able to meet them fairly. I have friends who visit me here, but those friends will seem to visit you; although you will see them but seldom, still there might come an occasion when you would be able to do me infinite service by seeing those friends; but all this to you, at present, is mysterious and vague; and I regret that it must for a time remain so."

"We will do all that you wish, sir," said Gerald, "and we shall still think that all to little too show our gratitude to you."

"It is well. It is well. I will not be unmindful of your interests, Alice. In due time your claims shall come before the proper tribunal."

"It will be an affair for the Privy Council, sir," said Gerald.

"It will; and the king presides there when he pleases; so you shall trust to the king."

There was a peculiar smile upon the face of the Owlet as he spoke.

"Stop. Sir—sir!" exclaimed Gerald.

"What is it, my friend?"

"I quite forgot about a scrap of paper that I found at Mr. Ambrose's, concealed in the very bracelet which poor dear Alice was accused of stealing."

"What is it?"

"This, sir."

"Ah! Let me see it. Good heavens!"

"You are ill, sir?"

"No—no."

The Owlet had staggered back and sunk upon a couch. He looked fearfully pale.

"You faint, sir?"

"No; I—am—better now. '*Adela Salisbury, married Oct. 5, 1735 (see cabinet, right hand, king's own chamber); died August 1, 1736.*'"

The Owlet read these words on the slip of paper that Gerald had found in the bracelet, with such an intensity of interest that they seemed to take away his breath.

Both Alice and Gerald looked at him in some alarm; for it was only very slowly that his colour came back to him.

"Does that paper, dear sir, awaken any recollections?" said Gerald.

"Recollections?" gasped the Owlet.

"Or does it concern you in any way, sir?"

"Does it concern me? It is my life—my crown. Hush! What am I about to say?"

"Sir?"

"Tell me again—again tell me how and where you found this paper. Let me listen to the minutest detail."

The Owlet hid his face in his hands while Gerald again described exactly how he had found the slip of paper concealed in the bracelet.

Then, with a deep sigh, the Owlet spoke.

"Yes," he said—as he paced the room, and seemed to forget for a moment or two that he was not alone—"yes; that bracelet must have been Adela's. Ambrose was the court jeweller—I see it all now. Oh, chance—chance! O Father in heaven! how strange you work in human affairs! This is indeed a most unlooked-for discovery."

"Then, sir," said Gerald, "that scrap of paper does interest you."

"Interest me! it is life to me. Unconsciously you have done me such a service that it is impossible I can ever repay it."

"Indeed, sir, I am rejoiced!"

"And I—and I. There is no obligation on your part, let me do what I may for you; and I hope that I shall have the power to do much—much—far more than your wildest dreams, Gerald, can ever picture! The information contained on this scrap of paper at once condenses, simplifies, and renders easy what before was full of difficulty, and full of peril and uncertainty. I am, in truth, much beholden to you, Gerald Alton."

It was evident that these words gave great satisfaction to both Gerald and Alice.

"Soon," added the Owlet, "you will better comprehend all this. At present, Gerald, I leave you for one hour, by which time I dare say you will be able to find a Protestant clergyman to unite you to Alice, if you will not think that the Abbé Deplesis can suffice."

"The Abbé Deplesis, sir?"

"Yes. That is the ecclesiastic whom you have seen, Gerald.

"I did not know him."

"No—no. But that is his name."

"I would rather have the Protestant clergyman."

"And I too," said Alice.

"Be it so. God forbid that I should begin now to be intolerant. Be it so. I have, Alice, a sister, whom you shall be introduced to. She is a young and artless girl, and you will find her friendly and kindly disposed towards you. She has been living in solitude for some time, and I am happy to give her such a companion and friend as yourself."

"But, dear sir," said Gerald, "as yet we have not even a name by which we can call you."

"I am Mr. Harold Blanchard, of his Majesty's Coldstream Regiment of Guards, at present."

"At present?"

"Yes, at present. Good day. I shall be with you both again in one hour; and do you, Gerald, find a clergyman. The house is open now, at the front facing the square, for you to go in and out at your pleasure, and the servants will recognize you as their master."

With a kindly smile the Owlet left the room, and the door was not closed after him.

It was with wonder and amazement that, after a brief conversation with Alice, Gerald went down to the hall of the house, and found everything there arranged like a well-appointed residence.

A hall-porter dozed, as it is the custom of hall-porters to do, in a large leathern half chair, half watch-box. Various servants, in a crimson livery, were about, and they all seemed to have been shown Gerald somehow; for they saluted him respectfully as master of the house.

And all this was so surprising, that more than once Gerald trembled as he reverted to the idea that all was but a dream of unusual distinctness, from

which he might at any moment awaken, to find himself in his attic at the jeweller's in Ludgate Hill.

But he went for a clergyman, and found no difficulty, on production of his rescript from Doctors' Commons; and within the hour there stood in the crimson and gold drawing-room in St. James's Square the bridal party.

The Owlet led the young girl he had brought from the cottage in the wild neglected garden, and in a courtly fashion introduced her.

"My sister," he said, "who is ever pleased to know my friends, and to make them hers."

Alice was delighted at the first glance with this young girl, and received her joyfully.

Then the ceremony was performed, and Gerald and Alice were man and wife.

It was exactly twenty-six hours from the period when Alice was in the death-cart, under the cross-beam at Tyburn, from which she was to be suspended, to the present time; and now she was a bride.

From a condemned criminal—from the most hopeless condition that it appeared possible for any one to fall into—she emerged rich, happy, married, and with apparently a life of happiness before her. Who shall despair?

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WOUNDED COLONEL BLANCHARD.

It was towards sunset on that same day when the Owlet had done so much for the happiness of Gerald and Alice, that he, in his uniform as a subaltern in the Coldstream Guards, walked leisurely into the soldier's guard-room to the left of the arched gateway of the old building.

"Sergeant—sergeant!" he called.

"Yes, your honour."

"Is it true what I am told, that neither Mr. Charles Beauchamp nor Colonel Blanchard are dead?"

"Quite true, your honour."

"Oh, I am delighted!"

"Mr. Beauchamp, your honour, is out of danger, they say, but not the colonel."

"Alas!"

"No, your honour. It is a bad wound."

"My poor cousin!"

"But all don't die, you know, of bad wounds. His honour, they say, has asked for you."

"I am glad to hear it. You see, sergeant, I was the colonel's second."

"Yes, your honour."

"And no sooner had the colonel engaged with Mr. Beauchamp, than Major O'Balriggin, who was Mr. Beauchamp's second, forced me into a fight with him, and I was compelled to kill him or be killed myself."

"Yes, your honour."

"So I ran him through; then at that moment I thought I saw the colonel kill Mr. Beauchamp; and, as we had agreed that, if such was the case, I should go into hiding a little time till all was settled, off I went."

"Yes, your honour."

"But a kind friend has brought me word of the real state of affairs, so here I am."

"Yes, your honour."

"And that is the whole story, sergeant."

"Just so, your honour."

"And now, as I don't suppose anybody cares a jot whether old Major O'Balriggin is alive or dead, I will go and see my cousin."

"No—yes, your honour."

The sergeant formally saluted Harold Blanchard, and stepped aside, and the ensign walked up-stairs to the officers' guard-room.

No one was there.

"Ah! he will be alone," said the Owlet. "In good truth I hope he is not badly hurt. I shall, I hope, be able most fully to recompense him for all he has suffered, both mentally and physically, and I will do so. He, too, like my friends Gerald Alton and Alice, will find great changes."

The Owlet very slowly and silently opened the door that led from the officers' guard-chamber to the private rooms in the occupation of the colonel.

And there, immediately on the other side of the door, he found the soldier-servant of the colonel, who drew himself up and saluted the Owlet.

"Oh, that is you, Stephens?"

"Yes, your honour."

"How is the colonel?"

"Moans bad, your honour."

"I am sorry to hear that."

"He asks for your honour."

"Then I will go to him at once. Is he alone?"

"Yes, your honour."

The Owlet found that it was in the third room of the suite that the colonel had been removed; and he was lying on a camp bedstead, apparently half asleep by the character of his breathing.

This room, which will form other and important appendage to incidents which we shall have to relate in full, deserves a description.

It was the third one, then, of the suite which was in possession of Colonel Blanchard as commanding officer of the Palace Guard.

The first of these was a private sitting-room, of which we have already given some brief account.

The second room was a dressing and accoutrement room, in which the arms, uniforms, and private property of the colonel were kept, and into which no visitors were ever shown.

The third was the room in which the wounded colonel was now lying, and which was of the same size as the second room.

This apartment, the aspect and appearance of which we wish to fix in the mind of the reader, was about twenty-two feet square, and had two windows that looked into the "Colour Court" of the palace; that court, in the centre of which there is now a post, with staples and rings in it through which the flag-staff of the colours of the regiment of Guards on duty at the palace can be placed.

The walls of the room were of very dark oak panelling, and the roof was shaded so as to imitate a dome shape, and some allegorical subject had been painted in the centre,—nothing of which remained very clearly but a sprawling figure which might represent some goddess, or a court beauty of the period of the second Charles.

Exactly opposite to the door of entrance to this room was another door with similar gilt moulding and furniture; but the keyhole was a blank to all appearance—although the door looked as if it would open—it was merely there for symmetry, as it was on one side of the chimney-piece, and there was another door on the other side exactly alike, which did open.

The other door, though, only disclosed, when opened, a deep cupboard or closét with shelves and pegs—and, in fact, in every way adapted as an armory or wardrobe

The chimney-piece was of fine statuary marble, and very elaborately carved.

The floor of the room was covered with plain crimson cloth. The windows were shaded by crimson silk curtains, but woefully faded. The furniture was of the same description as that in the outer room, but more faded and out of repair.

Indeed, it would seem these superior parts of the palace were furnished with the cast-off finery of the chief rooms, whether adapted for them or not.

And yet the apartment had a rich, and not altogether unhandsome look; and had it not been for the low ceiling—which is a radical defect all over St. James's Palace—the room might have looked palatial and even grand.

Opposite to the two windows was the camp bed of Colonel Blanchard.

This bed had no hangings; but half surrounding the head of it was a very beautiful and costly Indian screen, of six leaves or compartments, which, if fully opened, would suffice completely to surround the camp bedstead, with the exception of the foot of it.

On a small table that had been gilt, and the top of which was a very costly slab or marble, and which was placed close to the head of the bed, stood several bottles and glasses, containing medicaments prepared for the sick man.

One very beautiful jug of blue ware, that was of a most charming tint, evidently held some cooling drink, which he was to take freely—for a glass, three parts full, stood close to the jug, and within his reach.

The sword of the colonel, with its belt trailing on the floor, was laid across another table; and about the room was a variety of small articles—partly for the toilet and partly connected with the arms and appointments of an officer of rank.

The Owlet had opened the door of this room so softly, that, if indeed the colonel were sleeping, the sound would not disturb him; and as by the regular and deep-drawn breathing of Colonel Blanchard the Owlet considered that he was in a state of repose, he stood about two paces within the room, after closing the door very carefully, and looked with an expression of great interest about him.

What it was exactly in the fashion, shape, appearance, or appointments of the room that so deeply interested him would have been difficult to say.

Twice, then, he turned completely round, so that no corner of the apartment escaped his scrutiny; and then he went forward and listened attentively to the low breathing of the wounded colonel, who still slept.

It was that kind of sleep which follows the exhaustion of a wound, and which on the field of battle is so often the sleep of death.

Not a word did the Owlet speak, even in a whisper, to himself; but holding up his sword carefully, that it should not trail or strike against the floor, he now approached the bedside of Colonel Blanchard, and looked fixedly into the face of the wounded man.

There was blood upon the coverlet of the bed and upon the pillow; and a faint bluish tint was upon the forehead of the colonel.

The Owlet shook his head, as if he had, in his own mind, very great doubts about the possibility of his recovery; and then, for the first time, in a faint whisper he spoke.

"It must be soon," he said, "or these apartments will belong to another—for, should he die, he will be removed from the palace at once, as is the custom with every one who dies within its precincts. Yes, it must be soon."

Being satisfied, then, that Colonel Blanchard slept, the Owlet walked as softly across the room as foot could fall, and placed his hand upon the lock of the door, which was on one side of the chimney-piece, to balance that of the cupboard on the other.

The handle was a fixture.

Then the Owlet carefully examined this door, looking up and down the sides of it, and scrutinizing it in every possible way; for he seemed to have a doubt in regard to its absolute artificiality.

Those doubts, however, at length yielded to fact. The door was a mere imitation. There were no hinges; there were no means of opening it any more than any other fixed panel of the wall.

The Owlet shook his head and then nodded, as though his mind was quite made up on the point.

His next movement was to the cupboard on the other side of the chimney-piece.

The door was easily opened. It creaked, however, a little on its hinges.

The Owlet then took from his pocket a small bottle, and from it poured a few drops of very limpid oil over the hinges, and the creaking ceased.

Then he took a long and curious survey of the inside of the closet, and carefully passed his hand over the shelves. One only of them was loose and could be lifted out.

It was a heavy shelf; and before

lifting it, which he had every inclination to do, the Owlet stepped back into the room, and bent low down, with his hand behind his ear, to listen to the sleeper.

All was still.

Then the Owlet slowly and carefully lifted the shelf off the side brackets that supported it. The shelf was so strong and heavy that the side or edge of it was about two inches in width.

Where the edge next the panelled wall of the closet had touched, a piece of crimson cloth was glued, or otherwise fastened, all along, which would make the shelf fit tight, and exclude dust from coming on to it from the back.

This bit of crimson cloth was very accurately put on, and was exactly the width of the edge of the shelf.

The Owlet carefully ran his finger along it. All was hard beneath it, until he got to within about four inches of the end of it.

Then his finger sunk a little.

There was some hollow or hole there, behind the piece of crimson cloth that was so well fastened to the wall.

"Ah!" said the Owlet.

The sound broke the stillness of the room.

"Who? Who — is — it?" said Colonel Blanchard, faintly.

The Owlet in a moment replaced the shelf, and noiselessly closed the closet door.

"Some—one—surely spoke," moaned the colonel.

"It is I, dear friend," said the Owlet, as he stepped forward to the side of the couch.

"Ah!"

"Do not be alarmed. I came to see how you were. I found you sleeping, and looked from the window until you should of your own accord awake."

"Harold?"

"Yes; I am Harold! Are you very much hurt? I sincerely hope not. How do you feel now?"

"I hardly—know. But the fellow's sword must have been—have been—"

"What would you say?"

"Red-hot! red-hot!"

"It is the inflammation of your wound that makes you think so."

"Yes, I suppose so; I suppose so, because it would not have been possible."

"Certainly not."

"My foot slipped."

"No doubt."

"And the villain took me then at disadvantage. It was so very—very—"

"Very what?"

"Strange that all the dream came true! Your dream, you know—not my dream!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes. You went off I don't know where, after, as I thought, killing that major."

"I did kill him."

"You really killed him?"

"I did. He forced me into a fight with him. I fancy it was his intention so to do from the first, but I could not avoid it; so it became a question of him or me; and as I soon made up my mind about that, I ran him through the heart, and there was an end."

"Ah!"

"But what were you saying, colonel, about a dream?"

"Not my dream, but yours, you know."

"Well."

"Drink! Oh, give me some of the drink! It is on the table. I burn with thirst. I feel certain now."

"Certain of what?" asked the Owlet, as he held the glass to the colonel's lips.

"Certain that his sword was red-hot."

"Oh, that is all imagination, my dear colonel—mere imagination! But about this dream; what was it?"

"Do you remember the Owlet? Well, I slipped, you see, and Beauchamp, with the red-hot sword, although how he kept it red-hot I don't know, but he was on the point of taking my life, when some one strode over me and crossed swords with him."

"Indeed! Is it possible?"

"Yes, I saw the face for a moment. It was like an owl exactly—exactly."

"You surprise me, colonel,"

"It was so; or I am mad!—mad!"

"Then it was really this strange being with the face of an owl who saved you?"

"Yes, from another thrust which he (Beauchamp) would have given me; and he killed him, I think."

"No. He is badly hurt, but not yet dead."

"He suffers?"

"He does."

"Ah! and I suffer too. I wonder if the Owlet's sword was red-hot!"

It was at this moment that the Owlet heard voices in the outer rooms, and he paused in his discourse with the wounded colonel to listen.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. AMBROSE IS SENT ON A DANGEROUS MISSION.

It was about half-past five o'clock on the morning of the marriage of Gerald and Alice, and likewise on that morning when the Owlet paid his visit to the wounded colonel at St. James's Palace, that a violent knocking at the door of Mr. Ambrose, goldsmith and jeweller, on Ludgate Hill, awoke that wealthy and respected (consequently) citizen from his slumbers.

There are some folks who are always uncomfortably affected by any unusual noise or unusual visitor—and Mr. Ambrose was one of these folks.

Pale and trembling, he sprang from his bed, and opening a window on the second story of his house, he looked out into the street below.

A throng of persons were there. He could see the dirty-white great-coats of the watch, and some half-dozen people seemed to be speedily surrounding a sedan chair.

Bang! bang! bang! went another appeal to the knocker of Mr. Ambrose's door; for the people below did not see his head, adorned with a night-cap, protruding from an upper window, as he had not yet spoken.

Now, however, that his fears were a little assuaged, and that he did not think the people below came on an errand for his arrest, he gathered heart to speak.

"Holloa there! Holloa! What is all this?"

"There he is!" cried half a dozen voices at once. "There he is!"

This sudden recognition of him awakened again all the fears of the jeweller, and he was silent.

"Mr. Ambrose—sir—sir!" cried one from below. "If you please, worshipful sir!"

The guilty jeweller took courage again—for these words were far from menacing.

"What is all this disturbance about?" he cried. "It is vexatious that a respectable citizen should be roused from his bed in this way."

"But, sir, it is a gentleman; and as he is killed, he asked to be brought here, you see, sir."

"A gentleman?"

"Yes, sir."

"But if he be killed, this is not the proper place to bring him."

"He is not dead, sir," said another; "and he says his name is Sir Bernfide Esperance, and he has been set upon by thieves, or by murderers, Mr. Ambrose, and nearly killed."

"Good gracious! — that is quite another thing—I will be down in a moment."

The jeweller did come down. Upon sallying out at his door, he saw that the sedan chair had been opened, and in it, looking much more like a corpse than a living man, sat Sir Bernfide Esperance.

His lips were white and ashy; his eyes blurred and bloodshot, and his apparel all disordered and soaked with gore. He could not speak.

"Good heavens! how has this happened?" said Ambrose.

By a great effort, Sir Bernfide Esperance raised one of his hands and pointed into the house. There was no such thing as mistaking the gesture. He wanted to be taken in; and as the

jeweller would much rather he was in his house than in any other—considering what perilous secrets they had together, and that he was in a dying state—he made a virtue of his convictions, and cried out,—

"Certainly—of course—of course! God forbid that I should hesitate for a moment in affording any possible aid and shelter to any one who is hurt, whether they be friends of mine or not. Bring him in, my men—bring him in! He shall have bed and board with me!"

The wounded man was duly brought into the house, and carried up-stairs to a spare bedroom; and then, as Mr. Ambrose wished to keep a character with everybody, he was quite liberal in his rewards to the men who had picked up Sir Bernfide on the common, and brought him to Ludgate Hill.

"He could speak when we found him, poor gentleman!" said one of the men. "And the only thing he said was, 'Take me to Mr. Ambrose's, on Ludgate Hill.'"

"You were quite right to bring him here. I will see that he has every possible attention."

The men departed very well pleased; and Mr. Ambrose at once sent for a surgeon, who dressed Sir Bernfide's wound, and then shook his head, saying,—

"Three days will decide it."

"Will he live?" asked Ambrose.

"The chances are a hundred to one against him."

"But he has the one chance?"

"He has. The police ought to be informed."

"My dear sir, I am, as you know, an alderman and a magistrate, so I will see to that."

"True—true. I wish you good day, sir, and will send such medicines as the poor gentleman's state requires; but above all things he must not speak."

"Very good, sir."

"Must he not speak?" said Mr. Ambrose to himself, when the surgeon had gone. "That is just the very thing that he must and shall do!"

Mr. Ambrose then sought the bedside of Sir Bernfide Esperance, and having closed the door of the room, he said close to his ear, in a low tone,—

"How has this happened? Is it an accident? or does it in any way concern our plans?"

Sir Bernfide made a terrible struggle before he could speak; and then he said, faintly,—

"Concerns us."

"Oh! How?"

"He—he—"

"Who?"

"The dev—"

Mr. Ambrose started.

"Owlet!" added Sir Bernfide.

"Who?"

"Owlet!"

"You don't mean that the celebrated highwayman who goes by that name has wounded you?"

"Yes!"

"To rob you?"

"Too much!—knows—too much!—all."

"He knows all?"

"Yes!"

"The—villain!"

Sir Bernfide just had strength enough left to stretch out one hand, and to clutch the arm of Mr. Ambrose with a painful intensity.

"It—it may be my—death—to speak, but I must—I must!"

"To be sure—go on!"

"You must go—to—to—Corfe—Castle to-night—to-night, and get the small valise—at the bottom of the dry well—dry well, and bring it—bring it—"

"Here?"

"Yes—or all lost!—lost!"

"I will—I will."

"You — safe — while you have — have—"

"You mean that I am safe while I have that?"

"Yes! They must — terms with you."

"My dear friend."

"Then you must go to—asylum and

'ell him—settle the earl at once—you see—settle him!"

"To be sure I will."

"Then if I live—you see—I shall live if you send—send to Antwerp for Soljeuin Bergheim."

"Who?"

"Doctor—chemist—conjuror."

"Oh!"

"Get him—he cure me! I—earldom and estates—you half—sign paper! Save me! That's all!"

"I comprehend, my dear friend. You will, if I do all that you require, give me one-half of the Morton estates; and you are willing to sign any paper to that effect that I please?"

"Yes."

"Then depend on me."

"Yes. Send—Antwerp, Bergheim—chemist. Everybody knows him. Quick! Vessel! Expense nothing! Say for me—write letter! He will come—rogue!"

"My dear Sir Bernfide, all that you have ordered shall be done. In about two days and nights, I have no doubt, the man you name can be brought from Antwerp. I will, within one hour from now, charter a fast vessel in the Thames, and despatch her."

"Do—one-half—so help—God!"

"My dear Sir Bernfide, don't swear it. I will have a proper deed drawn up for you to sign, which will be much more satisfactory."

"Yes."

"Good-bye now. Keep yourself quiet, and all will go well."

"Yes."

The jeweller was as good as his word. The promise of one-half the vast estates of the Mortons was a bait that he was sure to snap at; and he knew that, with the death of Sir Bernfide Esperance, all further chance of fingering a single guinea more than he had already acquired on that affair would be at an end.

It never struck him that should Sir Bernfide recover, and sign any deed, however stringent, that would give him half the estates, he would think no more of cutting his (Mr. Ambrose's) throat, to get rid of the obligation, than he would of peeling an orange.

The fast sloop was sent off to Antwerp in search of the Dutch surgeon in whom Sir Bernfide had such faith; and Mr. Ambrose then made ready for a journey into Dorsetshire on that evening, and calculated that if he used great diligence he might reach Corfe Castle somewhere before daylight on the next morning, by partly availing himself of public conveyances, and by partly riding on horseback the latter portion of the road.

But Mr. Ambrose was not at all aware that there was an attentive listener to all that had passed, in the person of poor Timber, the charity boy.

Now Timber had seen the crowd of people come with the sedan chair up Ludgate Hill, and had seen them stop at the jeweller's door. One glance had let him know who it was that was brought there in so deplorable a plight.

When, then, Timber heard Mr. Ambrose express such hospitable intentions in regard to Sir Bernfide, he, Timber, ran round to the court, and got into the house by that way, and knowing well that there was but one room in the house in which there was a spare bed, Timber got at once under that bed, as the best place he could be in to get well informed of all that took place.

No sooner had Timber fairly ensconced himself under the huge old bed, than Sir Bernfide Esperance was brought in and placed upon it.

Thus Timber heard all that passed; and when Mr. Ambrose left the room, he crawled out from under the bed, and after shaking his clenched fists pantomimically towards Sir Bernfide, he made his way out of the house and ran towards St. James's Square.

But as he ran, poor Timber recollected that it would not be until nine o'clock on the next night that he would have an opportunity of seeing Gerald Alton with his news.

What was he to do?

The only place where he, Gerald,

could be found was at the railings of the square garden, so far as he, Timber, was informed.

"What is a cove to do?" said Timber, as he rubbed his head under the little muffin cap.

Timber was tolerably ingenious and fertile in expedients, but he could not convert seven o'clock in the morning into nine o'clock in the evening.

"Well," said Timber to himself, after a few moments' reflection, "I will wait here till he does come. He may live about here, and so he may come past; so here goes, and here I waits."

Timber then, with great agility, mounted to the top of a post, and there he sat, with his yellow and wasted legs dangling before him, and his metal badge on his breast patent to all beholders.

Hour after hour passed away, and there sat Timber.

To be sure, a perpetual sort of skirmish—sometimes with words and sometimes with stones—was kept up between him and boys who passed. He was informed, at least fifty times, that he was a "charity brat," and asked, deridingly, what he would take for his leather smalls.

But Timber kept his post.

And the day waned; and Gerald Alton was married to his own dear Alice; and, with her hand clasped in his, he stood by the window of the mansion, and looked out upon the world, which wore so different an aspect to him now from what it had ever done.

Then suddenly he started.

Alice looked alarmed.

"What is it, dear Gerald?"

"One moment, dearest. That boy!"

"Boy?"

"Yes, on the post. He is a friend of mine, and wants me, I am certain."

"It is Timber," said Alice. "I know him now. He was at Mr. Ambrose's."

"Yes—yes, dearest. It is Timber, and I am certain that he waits for me. Timber! Timber!"

Gerald Alton had opened the window, and stepped out on to the balcony of the house. Timber heard him, and with a cry of joy he clapped his hands together and sprang off the post.

"Holloa!" cried the hall-porter—as Timber, in his full parish costume, made his way into the hall of the mansion—"holloa! what do you want?"

"Gerald! Gerald!"

"Eh?"

By this time Gerald had made his way down into the hall, for he rightly guessed that poor Timber would find some difficulty in passing the Cerberus at the door.

"Ah! there he is," said Timber, as he saw Gerald, with a smile on his face, advancing to meet him, "there he is!"

"Yes, Timber, I am here; and I fancy you have something to tell me."

"Lots," said Timber.

"Come this way, then, and you shall see an old friend, who, you will be glad to see, is much happier than when you last saw her."

"Then it is that dear Miss Home."

"Yes, but Miss Home no longer. Follow me, Timber."

"Yes, dear Gerald. I will—I will; but there is no time; indeed there is no time."

"For what, Timber?"

"I will soon tell you. Stop here. Let us sit down on the stairs. They are quite as fine as any room. Let us sit here, Gerald, and I will tell you all about it."

Gerald smiled, but he took Timber by the arm, and led him to a small room on the drawing-room floor, and seated him in the deep recesses of a comfortable chair, and then he said,—

"Timber, you are pale."

"No breakfast, and I think, too—do you know, Gerald?—that it is now dinner-time, too."

"It is indeed, Timber."

Gerald touched a bell, and ordered the best that the house afforded for Timber, who was so struck with the silver plate on which the viands placed before him reposed, that his appetite almost forsook him.

"Come—come," said Gerald, "eat—eat freely, my dear friend."

"He calls me his dear friend!" said Timber, "O Gerald, I hope—I—I—"

"You hope what?"

"No matter; oh, of course, it's all right. What does the copy-book say? 'The pewter platter of honesty is better than the gold dish of—'"

"Timber! Timber!" interrupted Gerald, "can you for one moment suspect that these comforts and these luxuries that you see about you are come by in any other way than honestly?"

"No—no," replied Timber. "It's all right. What's that, Gerald?"

Timber pointed to a deeply cut decanter, in which glowed and sparkled some rare golden Spanish wine.

"Wine, Timber."

"I've heard of it."

"And did you never taste wine?"

Timber shook his head.

"Then do so now."

Timber tossed off a glass of the bright fascination; and then he said, with a look of wonderment,—

"Hurrah! But I don't think much of it. Oh dear! oh dear! what a wretch I is!"

"A wretch?"

"Yes. Let me tell you. There's that Sir Bernfide, half dead as he is, at Mr. Ambrose's; and Mr. Ambrose is worse than he is, I can tell you; and somebody—that is, the old earl as they call him—is to be settled; and Mr. Ambrose is to go this very night to Corfe Castle, and to get something out of a well; and a ship is to go to Antwerp for—for—ah! I thought I should—I should never be able to recollect his name; and you see I was under the bed all the time, and heard all about it, dear Gerald. It makes me wink."

"Wink? Why—how?"

"The wine, I mean."

"Oh, that is nothing! But, indeed, Timber, the news you bring is most important."

Gerald touched the bell again, and when a footman appeared, he said,—

"Is Mr. Blanchard within?"

"No, sir."

"I am here," said a voice at this moment; and the Owlet, with a calm smile upon his face, appeared at the door of the room. "I am here, Gerald, and have just come in from duty at the palace."

Timber looked as if some vague idea of making his escape had come over him, but Gerald laid his right hand upon the coarse serge collar of the charity coat as he said,—

"This is a good friend of mine."

"He is very welcome, I am sure, then," said the Owlet.

"He brings news," added Gerald.

The Owlet and Gerald then stepped into the recess of a window, and the latter rapidly repeated the intelligence that Timber had brought respecting the state of affairs at the jeweller's house on Ludgate Hill.

"The villains!" said the Owlet. "We must defeat all that. I thought when I had put that rascal, Sir Bernfide Esperance, out of the way of any active personal villany for a time, that the matter, as connected with the valise, said to be at the bottom of the dry well at Corfe Castle, would keep a little."

"But you see, sir, that villany never sleeps."

"Well, and we will not sleep. I will own that I am more than busy with other affairs at present, but yet I will not neglect this matter. Let me speak to this poor boy who has brought the news."

"Yes, he will tell you all truth. I would trust his word fully."

"He has an honest face, poor fellow!"

The Owlet turned toward Timber.

"Come, my boy," he said, "tell me what you think the wounded Sir Bernfide Esperance wanted Mr. Ambrose to do for him?"

"To send for the doctor in a ship; to go to Corfe Castle and get something out of a well; and to kill the old earl!"

"One, two, three things."

"That's it."

"And you think he was to do those three things in that exact order?"

"Eh?"

"I mean that he was to do those things, one after the other, as you have mentioned them."

"I am sure of it."

"Then he has sent the ship to Antwerp? So it is too late to stop that if we wished; and it is of no consequence if we could. He has started, too, by this time, for Corfe Castle, so that he cannot be prevented from that journey, but the next best thing can be done."

"And that, dear friend?"

"That is to let him go, and get the valise, which, I have no doubt in my own mind, contains the legal evidence of the marriage of the Honourable John Morton to Alice's mother; and then intercept him and take it from him, even at the door of his own house, whither he is quite certain to take it."

"Ah! yes," cried Gerald, "that will be the thing to do; but the poor mad Earl of Morton must not be allowed to fall a victim to those villanous men."

"He will be quite safe, you may depend, if they find the valise not in their possession. I do not think, after all the time that has elapsed, that they would commit an aimless murder. Besides, while Sir Bernfide Esperance is in the least dread of Alice finding friends and evidence to substantiate her claim to the title and the estates, it is more to his interest to keep the insane earl alive. It would only be in the event of his finding that he had for ever quenched Alice's claim, either by her death, as he tried to do, or by himself having possession of the only documentary proofs that could serve her, that he would feel the earl to be in his way."

"I see, I see."

"Leave all to me, then. This is Wednesday; and let this man Ambrose make what speed he may to Corfe Castle and back, he cannot see Ludgate Hill again until very late to-morrow night."

"That would be to be quick indeed!"

"It would; but I will give him credit for every speed and every facility on his journey, and you may safely leave the matter to me."

"With all the confidence in the world."

"It is well, it is well. And now, my friend, you are aware that—although you occupy the whole of this house seemingly—there are apartments at its back which can be reached by the route you know of, by the way of King Street, which I still hold in my possession."

"Ah, sir! is not the whole house yours? Do I not feel that I and dear Alice are the creatures of your bounty, and that you have treated us like a king?"

The Owlet smiled.

"You think so!" he said.

"We both think so. Our utmost gratitude, and our most eager wishes to meet your views in all things, will not express a tithe of what we feel."

"It is well. Let me add, then, to what I was saying, that you must not feel surprised if you should, from this portion of the premises which you occupy, hear any sounds indicative of the presence of people in the back part."

"I will not."

"They will be friends of mine."

"That, then, is more than sufficient."

"I thank you with all my heart."

"But how fain would I aid you, sir, whatever may be your objects! and I am sure they are good ones."

"They are *legitimate!*" said the Owlet, with a stress upon the word.

"Of that I am certain; and I was about to say that I hope the time will come when you will have sufficient confidence in me to allow me to be of assistance to you."

"I have that confidence now; and you are of assistance to me—of very great assistance—of more than you know of. Besides, have I not, through you, secured the happiness of one near and dear to me?"

"Of Alice?"

"Yes. But time presses now, and I am sure you fully comprehend me.

Adieu for the present, and trust this affair of the valise and of Mr. Ambrose solely to me. I will see to it in every particular."

The Owlet left the room and the house again, and Gerald turned his attention to Timber.

"My dear Timber, you shall now stay here, and share with me my good fortune."

Timber shook his head.

"Not yet, Gerald, not yet. It's better, you know, for me to go back to Ludgate Hill. Perhaps I may be able to bring you some more news, you know; and now that I know where to find you, I can come to you at any time."

"You are right, you are right; but so soon as all these affairs are over which complicate the fortunes of dear Alice, then, Timber, you shall no longer be the slave of any one; but, as my friend, I will see to your fortunes."

Timber wrung the hand of Gerald, and dashing his hand across his eyes to clear the clustering tears from them, he manfully balanced his muffin-cap on the side of his head, and set off for Ludgate Hill.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CONSPIRACY.

Twelve o'clock had just boomed forth from the many church steeples of London. The deep tones of St. Paul's had formed the bass of the chorus of sounds, while some lagging clocks in the suburbs with a faint high treble were the last to make proclamation of the midnight hour.

It was an intensely dark night.

Dense masses of clouds had, from about nine o'clock in the evening, swept over the sky, and they had thickened and accumulated until they almost seemed to rest upon the chimney-tops of London.

The lazy old watchmen woke up, and with dizzy, half-somnolent steps paraded their several beats.

"Past twelve, and a cloudy night."

That was the cry of the so-called guardian of the night, whose duty it was then, and even for many years afterwards, to proclaim both the hour and the weather.

Only it not unfrequently occurred that the so-called guardian of the night took a longer nap than usual, and woke up some two or three hours later than he thought it was, and at three or four o'clock in the morning would howl out his—

"Past one, and a foggy morning."

The fog, too, would be in and about his own eyes and brain.

But those were rare times for the midnight burglar, for the footpad, the street thief, and even the assassin.

The watchmen were made conspicuous, so that they might be seen by all evil-doers from a distance; as if the object had been to warn them just to get out of the way, and to suspend operations for a few moments.

These watchmen, then, were old superannuated paupers from the various parishes, whose uncouth garments, incapacity, and general appearance have been so often described.

It was twelve o'clock on that September night in old London; and the watchman of that district took his meandering, half-stupid, dozing way down King Street—the King Street which was at the back of Gerald Alton's fine house in St. James's Square.

"Past twelve o'clock, and a cloudy night. Eh? Who are you? Move on."

"My dear friend," said a mild voice, in most gentle accents, "Mr. Smith thinks you must feel cold."

"Eh? Move on."

"And he has sent out for you this dram."

"A dram?"

"Yes, dear friend. He says that it is a sad thing to awaken in the night and feel that a respectable man—a man who has seen better days, and nights too—is abroad and calling the hour with nothing to drink."

"So it is—so it is. He's a gemman, he is. Mr. Smith, is he?"

"Yes."

"And the—a—dram?"

"It is here in this bottle."

"Good!"

"You will find it so without a doubt."

"All's right. Here's his health."

"Good night, sir. Past twelve, and a cloudy—it is good—night. Past—strong, too, it is—twelve, and a clou—ah! it's the right stuff—dy night. Dear me—how—very—sleepy—I do feel. Past night, and a cloudy twelve—no—a cloudy clock. Eh? Move on there! Move on, will you! You obstinate. Oh! it's only a post—a—a—post. Past—Smith, and a cloudy—dram. Ah!"

The watchman slid down by the side of a post, at the corner of King Street.

The bottle, now empty of its dram, rolled into the kennel and broke.

The watchman slept.

The clouds above now opened a little. The darkness of the night was not quite so intense, and a soft rain began to fall.

Then a tall figure, muffled up in a red-coloured cloak, made its way into King Street, and marched with long strides toward the little door in the garden or stable wall, through which Gerald had first been introduced by the Owlet.

A peculiar tap was given to the door, and it was opened on the moment. Some one word was uttered, and the tall figure glided in, and the door was shut.

Hardly had this incident taken place when another figure, muffled, if possible, still closer in a cloak, appeared in King Street, and, after glancing around suspiciously, made its way toward the same small door. But before this second person could tap with his knuckles for admission, a third appeared in King Street, and reached the door hurriedly.

A few words passed between these two persons before the door was opened.

"I am glad to see your grace," said the one who had reached the door first.

"Hush!—hush!" said the other.

The door was opened.

"Crown!" said he who had said he was glad to see "his grace," and then they both passed in.

The watchman slept profoundly.

Another and yet another man, in cloaks—then two together, and finally no less than thirteen had passed in at the little door, and soft rain fell pattering down, and not a footfall disturbed the repose of King Street.

No more came.

All was still as the grave. The watchman ceased to make even a slight gurgling sound in his throat.

The watchman was dead. He had taken his last dram. It was no longer a cloudy night to him.

And now from the gloomy and rain-bedraggled exterior of that mysterious house we will step into an interior that has all the appearance of the most profound caution and mystery.

A large room, very thickly carpeted, and hung all round with cloth, is in the occupation of thirteen men. A very dim lamp, suspended from the ceiling, sends sickly-looking rays upon the faces and the apparel of the persons grouped beneath it. They have not cast aside their cloaks wholly, but they are no longer so muffled up in them as they were, and beneath those cloaks may be seen plain, but rich as regards quality, apparel.

They one and all wore swords; and from the bulky and irregular set of some of their vests, it might be supposed that some of them had concealed firearms.

A round table was in the room, covered with a cloth of crimson velvet. Paper, pens, and ink were in profusion on this table.

The chairs in the room were fifteen in number. There were thirteen of crimson velvet, with gilt frames; there was one all plain black cloth; there was another, on the back of which was a gilt royal crown, which just gave it that additional height above the others.

A faint buzz of conversation was going on among the thirteen persons

there assembled. It was so subdued that it sounded—taking into consideration the peculiarities of the English language—like a half-suppressed hissing, with only now and then a deeper tone mingled with it.

A door then opened noiselessly, and a portion of the cloth hangings were drawn aside.

The priest, who had been named as an abbé by the Owlet to Gerald, glided rather than walked into the room.

"Ah!" said one, "here is our friend the abbé. How are you, abbé?"

The priest bowed low.

"I have the honour, my lord, to be quite well," he said.

"That is right. We should miss you, abbé, as our able secretary and clerk of council."

"You are very good, my lord."

"It gets late," said another.

The abbé seemed to be counting the members present, for he then said,—

"Thirteen—all here. I was not quite sure but that only twelve had come."

"No, monsieur l'abbé," said one; "we are all here."

"I see it is so, your grace."

The abbé then left the room in the same way by which he had entered it, and the cloth hanging settled down behind him.

Then there was a pause in the whispered conversation among the various persons assembled, and a general drawing together around the table.

About three minutes might have passed away in mute expectation, and then from one portion of the room the cloth hanging was abruptly drawn aside; and a low, but clear voice, said,—

"The king!"

With a firm, quick step, the Owlet entered the room.

The thirteen persons bowed low, and then stood in respectful silence.

"My lords," said the Owlet, "be seated."

He then himself sat in the chair which had the covered and gilt crown at its back; and the thirteen persons present took seats around the table.

The abbé glided in again, and took a seat at a small table, a little apart, on the black chairs.

"My lords," said the Owlet, "now that we are in privy council assembled and all present, we have an important communication to make."

The thirteen persons bowed their heads; and then one said, with great respect,—

"We surmised, by your Majesty's summons, that the circumstance was one of no small moment."

"You are right, my lord duke," replied the Owlet. "It is of no small moment; and I cannot help thinking that you will all perceive in it the special aid of Providence."

The thirteen heads were all again bowed.

"That clear and irrefragable proof existed," added the Owlet, "of the marriage of Frederick, Prince of Wales—the son of his Majesty King George the Second—with the Lady Adela Salisbury, we never entertained a doubt; and that those proofs were among the private papers of the royal family we fully believed. The difficulty was to know where to lay hands upon them."

"Nevertheless," said one of the council, "we of your Majesty's privy council are quite satisfied, from the documentary and other evidence which your Majesty has produced to us from time to time, that such marriage did take place; and that your Majesty is the issue of that marriage, and, consequently, the rightful king, by royal and legal descent, of these realms."

"There can be no doubt of that," said another; "the present reigning sovereign—King George the Third, as he is styled—is legitimate enough; but he is a younger son, and half-brother to your Majesty by Prince Frederick's second marriage."

"That is the case," said several. "That is it."

"And, moreover," said one who had

not yet spoken, "since his Majesty, whom we have the honour to see now before us, has been brought up in the holy Catholic faith, we, as Catholic noblemen, cannot but feel a special interest in placing him on the throne of his ancestors."

A general expression of assent followed this speech; and then the Owlet spoke again,—

"It is so, my lords; and, as we have appointed you all as members of our Privy Council, and to various high dignities about us, we hope that we shall have the pleasure of confirming these appointments before all the world."

The lords of the council bowed again.

"And so, my lords, we will now state to you what the circumstance is that induced us to call this special meeting of our council. A most extraordinary accident has placed in our hands a memorandum, which we have no doubt whatever was written by our mother, the Princess Adela of Wales, which points out precisely where the proofs of her marriage with our royal father are to be found."

A look of surprised gratification passed over the faces of the council.

"Here is the document," said the Owlet.

He placed on the council-table the little slip of paper which Gerald found in the bracelet, at the jeweller's shop. The council passed it from hand to hand, and regarded it with evident looks of satisfaction.

"Your Majesty is evidently favoured by Providence," said one; "but still these documents mentioned, or mentioned by implication, in this paper are difficult, if not impossible of access."

"Nay, we have a plan for that," said the Owlet, with a smile.

A small bell at this moment rang sharply and violently, somewhere close at hand.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SPY IN THE COUNCIL.

When the strange meeting, in the house in St. James's Square, of the pretender to the crown of England and his council was interrupted by the sharp, loud ringing of a bell, there was a general start of surprise, and some appearance of consternation.

The Owlet glanced toward the abbé, who rose in his usual quiet, gliding way, saying,—

"It is nothing, your Majesty and my good lords. It is, no doubt, one of our emissaries, with some report."

The bell sounded again.

"Are you sure of that, abbé?" said the member of the council who was called "your grace."

"Yes, if the bell sound a third time, your grace."

The sharp tingle of the bell a third time almost mingled with the quiet tones of the abbé's voice.

"There!" he said; "it is a friend. Your Majesty will doubtless excuse me for a moment?"

The Owlet bowed slightly.

The abbé left the council-chamber.

A marked silence ensued for some few moments, which was broken by the Owlet saying,—

"My lords, as we said, we have a plan which promises every possible success, and which will put us in possession of those papers which our royal mother has, no doubt, well preserved, with the hope that Heaven, in its own good time, would render them serviceable to us."

The abbé at this moment glided into the room again, and stood as if waiting permission to speak.

"Well, abbé," said the Owlet, "we shall be glad, as we always are, to hear your report."

"It will be in your Majesty's recollection," said the abbé, "that it was the opinion of your Majesty and of your Council, that the adhesion to your Majesty's claims and rights of the

French ambassador was a point worth gaining."

"Just so," replied the Owlet; "and if we recollect rightly, Monsieur l'Abbé, you communicated with the Marquis de Villefort on the subject?"

"I did, your Majesty; and as the Marquis possessed the same holy and Catholic faith as ourselves, I put to him an oath, that he dared not break, that if he should decline to share with us the peril, if any, and the glory which would be certain of placing your Majesty upon the throne of your ancestors, he would keep within the recesses of his own bosom all that I might tell him."

"Exactly, Monsieur l'Abbé. You did warily, as you ever do."

The abbé bowed profoundly.

"The Marquis de Villefort, then, your Majesty, as I had the honour of stating at the time, took one week to consider before giving his reply. The week is over."

"Ah, is it so? We guess, then—"

"That Monsieur le Marquis de Villefort is here, your Majesty, and craves permission to avow himself your Majesty's most faithful friend."

"That is well. What say you, my lords?"

"It is well," said one, "your Majesty, because it must be well; but—but—"

"You look doubtful, my lord."

"I feel doubtful, sire. The Marquis de Villefort is well known as an *intriguant*. He has the reputation of being one of the—the—what do you call those men in Paris, abbé, who believe in nothing?"

"Nay, my lord—"

"Yes—yes; they have a name. Ah, I recollect. They are called, your Majesty, encyclopædiasts."

"I think," said the abbé, quietly, "they do believe in something. At all events, the mere personal honour of such a man as the Marquis de Villefort would insure his good faith; and besides, he has everything to gain and nothing to lose by the change of monarchs; and besides—"

"Well, abbé, what besides?"

"He is here."

There was a smile upon the faces of some of the council, and uneasy looks upon others. The Owlet, however, spoke with an air of confidence.

"Abbé your last reason is as good as all the others. And there is one thing we must be careful to avoid, my lords, as it is the way in which traitors are most readily manufactured, and that is, we must not let any one see that he is mistrusted."

There was a general and immediate assent to this doctrine; and then the Owlet added,—

"We will, then, receive the Marquis de Villefort."

The abbé bowed and left the room.

No one spoke now until the abbé returned, bringing with him the French ambassador, who was perfectly well known to all present. He was received with grave looks and recognitions; and he stepped up to the Owlet, and bowed very low indeed as he said, in tolerable English, but with a strongly marked French accent,—

"I beg to offer to your Majesty my most humble and devoted services."

"And we are glad to see you, Marquis. What do you think will be the opinion at the Court of Versailles on such a change as we contemplate in the reigning head of this country?"

"It cannot be, your Majesty, anything but all your Majesty can wish. The steady descent, through legitimate channels, of all crowns, cannot but be a matter of congratulation to all kings."

"And besides, a profession of the holy Catholic faith," said one of the council, "is a great thing on the part of the monarch of this country."

"My lords," said the Owlet, "we would not have you expect too much on that score. We think that the Protestantism of this country is strong to fanaticism, but yet we shall have the opportunity of enunciating such concessions to Catholicism as shall make its

residence in this country much more easy than it is now."

"Beyond a doubt," said the French ambassador. "His Majesty Charles the Second, who was a sincere Catholic, was able to do much."

"And his Majesty James the Second lost his throne," said the Owlet, "by trying to do more. My lords, we must not let our royal fortunes be wrecked on that rock. We pray you to be seated, Marquis de Villefort, and to make on this occasion one of our council."

The Marquis looked around.

There was no chair for him.

The abbé then brought his own chair, which was covered with black cloth—and bowing, he placed it at the table.

"By the next council meeting, Marquis," he said, "there shall be a proper chair for you. I perceive you look curiously at this chair. It is one I occupy from choice."

"From choice?"

"Yes, Marquis; and I glory in these stains that even show through the covering."

"Stains, M. l'Abbé?"

"Yes, Marquis; they are blood."

"Ah!"

"The blood of a traitor. We have had one—and only one—traitor here He was killed in that chair."

The Marquis de Villefort turned very pale.

"Oh, I can stand," he said.

"Nay, we beg that you will be seated," said the Owlet.

"Your Majesty's wishes are commands," replied the Marquis de Villefort, recovering his composure by a great effort; "and but that a faithful friend may have a slight natural reluctance to occupy the seat which is stained with the blood of a traitor, the chair will do right well."

The Owlet inclined his head slightly in assent; and then, turning his observation to a member of the council, he said,—

"We will now hear you, my lord."

A man with light, flossy hair, and whose complexion, lips, eyes, hair, and face seemed all alike—white and dusty-looking—spoke in a calm, cool voice,—

"Your Majesty and my lords, I am decidedly of opinion that what I am about to propose is a something which, although at first sight it may present to you a repugnant aspect, is still the only plan which will ultimately be found the most humane and the most judicious for us to adopt."

They all listened with evident interest.

"If your Majesty should succeed in procuring the important documents your Majesty mentions, it would only be by a tedious appeal to the legislature of the kingdom that anything could be done; and from that moment England would become a focus of intrigue."

"True—true," said several.

"Therefore," added the speaker, slightly raising his voice, as he either warmed with his subject, or gathered courage from the approval that his exordium had produced—"therefore, what I propose is, that there should be no rallying-point for sedition, no peg left on which to hang treasons and plots, and no name by which evil wars might be fomented."

The speaker paused a moment, and then, amid the intense stillness of the council, he added,—

"I propose, then, the death of George the Third, as he is styled."

The Owlet drew a long breath.

The council were silent.

"If he be permitted to live," added the speaker, "England will rue it for many a long day, and blood will be common in the land. He is coarse, brutal, and obstinate. He will see no reason, and hear no reason, why he should be ousted from the throne he now occupies. You will be dealing with a half-madman, who has all the cunning of people in his condition, and all the savagery and brutality of his own mental organization, which is one of the lowest order. I therefore propose that George the Third be put out

of the way of making himself mischievous. What say you, gentlemen?"

There was a whispered conference among the council, and then another spoke.

"It will be hardly sufficient," he said, "to decide that, in the interests of his Majesty here present and of true humanity, George the Third, falsely so styled, should be put to death. The difficulty will be in regard to the circumstances under which it shall be done."

"Let it be this way," said another speaker. "Suppose that the present usurper—for such he is—be put to death, I should advise that his Majesty, whom we acknowledge, be there on the spot—in the palace, and that we all surround him, and call upon the Guards to acknowledge him as king, showing the officers the proofs of his parentage and birth. The great officers of state can be sent for one by one, and when they find what is the state of affairs, and are convinced ' the real and legitimate claim of Majesty, their adhesion, I think, will be certain."

"Vote, my lords," said another, "vote on the question of the death of the present king."

"Nay—nay!" laughed the Owlet, "we are the present king, or the king present."

"I humbly beg your Majesty's most gracious pardon. It was a slip of the tongue."

"And so we take it. It is not worth a thought, my good lord, for we know you as a friend."

"Let the vote be taken by ballot," said another.

"Be it so," said the Owlet.

A hat was placed on the table, and the various members of the council tore off from the sheets of paper that were lying before them like slips, and shading them with their hands from each other, they each wrote a word, and then folding up the little slips, they threw them into the hat.

"Now, abbé," said the Owlet, "we shall see the decision of our council."

The abbé turned all the slips from the hat, and then opened them one after the other.

The word "Death" was on twelve slips. "Life" on one only.

"He is to die," said the abbé.

The French ambassador looked uneasy.

Then the Owlet spoke.

"My lords all," he said, "I, and I alone, will take care that the decision of this council is carried out."

There was a solemn stillness.

"I alone, I say, will see to it. And now, my lords, absolving you from all blame or censure on this account, I will request of you that you meet me on the night of Saturday next."

"Where, sire?"

"At St. James's Palace."

There was a visible sensation.

"There is a window," added the Owlet, "which looks into the Colour Court. It is the centre one of three, which are at equal distances from each other. They all look to the southward."

The members of the council bowed, to signify that they understood the window indicated.

"Some time," continued the Owlet, "between the hours of twelve o'clock and two on Saturday night next, I will open that window from within, and cry out, 'Long live the king!'"

"And we," said several of the lords—"we will cry out, 'Long live King Harold the Second!'"

"We shall thank you, my lords; and now, breaking up this council, we leave you to make what adherents and what strength you can, among your several families and connections. Every officer of the army who joins with us shall have his next step in rank at once; and all civilians shall have such rank and position as befit their several conditions, but all in advance of what they are."

The Owlet rose from the chair with the crown at the back of it, and bowed to the council.

The council all rose on the instant.

"Way for the king!" said the abbé, as he dr·w aside the crimson cloth

which covered the door by which the Owlet had entered the room.

Another moment and he was gone.

One by one then the strange council departed the way they had come, and King Street was again deserted.

The dead watchman still leant against the post, and the rain pattered upon his corpse.

The Duke De Villefort walked at a rapid pace toward the French Embassy, which was opposite the Green Park; and as he went, he opened and shut his right hand as he muttered,—

"I have them all—I have them all now. We shall get our treaty signed, and these heads will all lie low enough. Ha! ha! messieurs, I have you now. It don't suit the Court of Versailles to have a revolution in England now—*sacre, non!*"

CHAPTER XXI.

CORFE CASTLE—THE DRY WELL.

Mr. Ambrose, the court jeweller of Ludgate Hill, in the good city of London, had quite made up his mind to place himself and his fortunes in the same boat with Sir Bernfide Esperance.

The thousand pounds he had already received for the villanous attempt to bring poor Alice to a disgraceful and awful end at the gallows had whetted his appetite for further plunder from the magnificent Morton estates.

He resolved, then, to do all that Sir Bernfide Esperance required of him.

But first Mr. Ambrose drew up himself, with much deliberation and caution, a deed by which Sir Bernfide bound himself to make over to him a clear moiety of the estates of Morton, in the event of his becoming legally invested with them.

This deed he took to the bedside of the wounded man, and placing a pen in his hand he said,—

"Sir Bernfide, this is the legal document which will secure to me the performance of your promise."

"Yes," said Sir Bernfide, feebly, "I—will sign."

"Shall I read it?"

"No."

"You take it on faith, then?"

"I do. The pen."

"Then I assure you, Sir Bernfide, that there is no more in it than is sufficient to carry out our mutual wishes in the matter, and you may sign it without scruple."

"I have no scruples—never had any."

The deed was signed.

"That will do, Sir Bernfide, I thank you."

"The ship?"

"Has gone to Antwerp."

"Ah! The valise?"

"I start for Corfe Castle directly."

"The mad earl?"

"He shall die to-morrow!"

"I am content."

"And so am I," said Mr. Ambrose, as he left the room; and, as good as his word, at once set off for Dorsetshire.

Travelling, we need scarcely remind the reader, was very different indeed in those days from what it is now, when the rail will whirl a man from London to Dorsetshire, if such be his destination, in a few hours.

Mr. Ambrose could not even get a stage-coach until quite late in the evening; so, although the expense was serious, he resolved to post to Lymington, from whence he intended to take a water conveyance to the coast of Dorset opposite, and so make his way as secretly as might be to Corfe Castle, the position of which he knew tolerably well, and that it was a ruin which stood a few miles inland from a small bay called Studland.

But Mr. Ambrose was not quite aware that he was not the only person who was on the road from London to Dorsetshire that night.

It so happened that no sooner had Mr. Ambrose left his house on Ludgate to undertake the journey to Corfe Castle, than Jonas Brand, the thief-taker, arrived at the shop.

Jonas looked ill and pale, and he had his arm in a sling, but his tones were as harsh and brutal as ever.

"Hilloa!" was the polite exclamation. "I want Ambrose — where is he?"

There was a shopman of the jeweller named Phillipson, who was remarkable for the suavity of his manners, and he answered Jonas Brand with his perpetual provoking smile and circumlocution of phrase.

"Why, if you please, Mr. Jonas Brand? And hoping at the same time that you are quite well, sir, and that your arm—your precious arm, as I may call it—is not seriously hurt, although I do see it in a sling, sir—"

A growl like that from an enraged bear came from Jonas Brand.

"I didn't ask you about my arm. I ask you for Mr. Ambrose."

"Well, Mr. Jonas Brand, since, sir, you are rather impatient—and I don't know, my dear sir, and would not take upon myself for the world to say that you have not a right to be impatient—"

This was too much for Brand. He darted his most savage look at the shopman, and muttering something about there being no necessity to stretch his tongue, but a hope that he might some day have the pleasure of stretching his neck, he then passed through the shop; and assuming the privilege of an acquaintance, he made his way through the door that opened into the staircase —that door and that staircase which Gerald had to watch so narrowly while engaged in listening to the conversation between the jeweller and Sir Bernfide Esperance,—Jonas Brand darted up to the first floor of the house.

"Hilloa!" he cried. "Ambrose! Ambrose! Where, in the name of all the fiends, are you, Ambrose, I say?"

Jonas Brand then paused to listen, and he thought he heard a low groan.

"What—what's that?"

The groan was repeated.

Jonas Brand followed the sound. He felt convinced it came from a room on that floor. He pushed open a half-glass door, and was in the bedroom devoted to the use of Sir Bernfide Esperance.

The groan came a third time to his ears, and he strode up to the bed and held aside the curtain.

"Hilloa!"

Sir Bernfide opened his eyes. They were fevered, and a strange glisten was about them.

"Who is that?" he said.

"Me," replied Jonas.

"You? Who—who?"

"Brand."

"Jonas?"

"Just so."

"Ah! You—you?"

"Yes, I. You seem to have been hard hit, Sir Bernfide."

"I am—I am—the Owlet."

"Oh, that's it, is it? Well, there's an end of the little expedition to Corfe Castle."

"No—no, Ambrose."

"Ah!"

Sir Bernfide had said what he did not intend to say, for Jonas Brand was about the last person to whom he would have confided the fact of the journey of Ambrose to Corfe Castle in search of the valise at the bottom of the dry well.

But Sir Bernfide's mental faculties, usually so keen, were under the influence of the fever that consumed his heart, and he hardly knew what he said.

Jonas Brand, however, had heard enough to guide him, so he said with a light and jocose air,—

"Oh, you have sent him."

"Him—him? Who?"

"Ambrose."

"Where is he?"

"Why, you have sent him to Corfe Castle, you know, to get the valise and bring it to you."

"No—no."

"I say, yes!"

"No, I say. Jonas Brand, you are wrong."

Jonas laughed.

"Well—well, what does it matter, you know, Sir Bernfide Esperance, so long as you have it?—so long as we have it among us, you know? I am

quite delighted that Ambrose has gone for it,—because, because you see—"

"What—oh, what?"

"I can meet him there yet, and make him give it up to me."

"To you?"

"To be sure. He is not the kind of man to be trusted by such men as you and I, Sir Bernfido; and so I will take possession of it, and keep it till you get better."

"Oh!"

"That is quite agreeable?"

"Yes, quite. Oh, of course! I tell you what we will do, Jonas Brand."

"What?"

"He will bring it here, and then I will send for you to take it away with you."

"To be sure—to be sure! That will be the way to do it. Ha! ha! Good morning! You will soon be well again."

"You think so?"

"Of course I do. People who are born to be hanged, you know, are sure to get well of everything else. Ha! ha! It's an old saying, but a true one. Good morning, Sir Bernfide: I will call and see you again soon."

Jonas Brand walked whistling out of the room, and Sir Berntido Esperance shook his clenched hand after him and groaned out,—

"O that I were but as I was yesterday! you should sleep the sleep of death this night, villain that you are; but I shall recover. I shall get quite well, and then, Jonas Brand, look to yourself.

There was a baleful threatening look about the eyes of Sir Bernfido Esperance as he half closed them and sank back on his pillow again.

Jonas Brand, within twenty minutes of that time, was on a stout horse and on his route for Dorsetshire. He felt quite convinced that he was preceded by Mr. Ambrose the jeweller.

And, in truth, Ambrose had the start of him; but as they went by different routes, Ambrose was not aware that Jonas Brand had got some miles ahead of him.

Ambrose went direct to Lymington, where he proposed taking a boat to Studland Bay.

Jonas Brand rode into Dorsetshire, leaving Lymington on his left.

Money was not an object with Jonas Brand when he was on an errand that might possibly be so profitable a one as the present.

He rode his own horse thirty miles only, and then he put it up carefully and hired another; and so he went on, stage after stage, with a power of endurance that Mr. Ambrose could by no means have competed with, until he got into Dorsetshire by a town named Winsborne, intending to ride to Poole, and there take a boat across the bay toward Corfe Castle.

Jonas Brand had ridden one hundred and forty-two miles in sixteen hours. He had started from London at about half-past ten o'clock in the forenoon. He was at Poole, in the neighbourhood of Corfe Castle, about half-past four on the following morning.

It was a cold, wretched autumn morning—all damp, sloppy, and cheerless—when Jonas Brand rode into Poole, and halted at a hostel in the High Street close to the market-place.

Not a soul was astir in the town.

But hostlers and innkeepers have no objection to being disturbed by customers, and Jonas Brand soon made himself heard. He put up his horse, promised to return in a few hours, and then went down to the beach to see if any fisherman was about, whose boat he could hire to take him over to the bay.

There were boats enough in the creek, but no one who owned them could be seen.

Jonas Brand, however, made a racket against the door of a hut close at hand, and soon roused a poor fisherman, to whom he cried out, "A guinea, my man—a guinea for a cast over to Studland."

"Ay, your honour, that will be a good morning's work," said the man, "if your honour really means it."

"Here is the gold."

The sight of the guinea dispelled all the fisherman's doubts of such a piece of good fortune; and he roused his boy, and soon the well-made sea-boat was dancing over the waves toward Studland.

"Corfe is close to Studland, I fancy," said Jonas.

"Quite, your honour."

"What boat is that yonder?"

The fisherman could just see, through the night haze, a vessel with a square sail and jib.

"An early fisher, I should say, sir."

"From Poole?"

"No; from Lymington, I take it, by the look of her, so far as one can see by this light."

"Oh!—ah!—well! No—no, it cannot be Ambrose—I am far ahead of him."

It was Ambrose, though.

The fact was, that Ambrose too felt that a little money would not be badly spent on the project of getting possession of the valise, which probably contained the papers so essential to the proof of the birth and legitimacy of Alice Home, as she was called.

If Sir Bernfido Esperance did not pay a good price for such documents she would; and, in any case, they were of immense value to whoever might be so fortunate as to hold possession of them.

Therefore was it that even as Jonas Brand had spared no cost to get to Poole with speed, Mr. Ambrose had spared none to get with expedition to Lymington.

The post-chaise had carried him—take it for all in all—at very much about the same rate that Jonas Brand had succeeded in travelling on horseback; and at the very moment that Brand had trotted into the High Street of Poole, Mr. Ambrose had set sail in a small fishing-lugger from Lymington.

But there were some cross-currents about the coast, which necessitated a long tack on the part of the lugger, while no such necessity existed in respect to the rowing-boat Jonas Brand was in.

The consequence was that Jonas Brand landed at the little bay of Studland about half an hour before Mr. Ambrose, and he had therefore the start of him in the route to Corfe Castle.

It was not much, but it produced rather important results both to Jonas Brand and to Mr. Ambrose.

There is a small village called Corfe close to the castle. This village boasts of an inn, and some little cooped-up places that are dignified by the name of shops, in which, as in country places of such description, every possible thing is sold that can by any means be supposed to be wanted by the residents of the neighbourhood.

To one of those shops Jonas Brand made his way, for he wanted some articles that he had not been able in his haste to bring from London with him, and which, had he spared himself time to procure them, would have much encumbered him on his journey.

A long rope Jonas Brand wanted, of sufficient stoutness to support a good weight—that good weight (good only on account of its ponderosity) being himself. Then he wanted some stout hooks and a hammer, all of which things he got—saying they were for a yacht lying out in the bay—at one of the before-mentioned shops at Corfe.

Then just as he found, by consulting his watch, that it was six o'clock in the morning, Jonas Brand commenced his walk up the hill to Corfe Castle.

The castle had held out, during the civil wars of the Commonwealth in England, against the forces of Cromwell in the cause of the king.

It was so hopeless a struggle, that when it was over and the castle taken, Cromwell said that royalists should have no future opportunity of giving trouble by holding possession of it; so he blew it up. The thick walls were rent asunder by the blast of powder.

The huge gateway was cleft in two, and one-half lifted up some five feet from the other side. The fractured arch remains to this day. In fact, the whole pile was a complete ruin when

Jonas Brand reached the top of the mound on which it stands.

The dawn was very dimly to be seen coming, and a cold wind was whistling about the old time worn and gunpowder-blackened stones of the castle.

CHAPTER XXII.

JONAS BRAND ENDS HIS CAREER.

"How shall I find this old well of the castle?" said Jonas to himself, as he entered the lofty building and felt himself in a darkness which would not be in any degree dispelled yet for a good hour to come.

To be sure, he would have found no difficulty in procuring a guide from the village; but his was an errand that did not afford witnesses, so he rather chose to lose some time in searching for the well than to bring some person with him who would point it out, and then be too officious in remaining to see what his object was.

Through ancient halls, the ceilings of which had long since departed, and the floors of which were mounded up with rubbish and weeds and wild grasses, Jonas Brand took his way; down crumbling old staircases in turrets that were fearfully off the perpendicular, and across courtyards that had long since been reclaimed by the thistle, the dandelion, and large dock leaves from anything approaching civilization.

Still he found no well.

Then he lit a small lantern that he had with him, and after another careful hunt through the ruins he came upon what he thought should be the spot he sought.

There was a sort of parapet of stone, and there were the remains of some wooden buildings which had probably contained a windlass. Yes, surely he had now found the well.

But was it a dry well, as had been said? That was a question of no small moment. If still with water in it the search in its depths for the valise would be hopeless.

With his lantern in his hand, Jonas Brand stooped over the little stone coping or parapet to make his observations, and then, with a pang of disappointment, he saw that, although there was an evident circular depression in the earth, indicating that there had been a well there, it was now filled up.

This was a discovery that seemed to settle the whole question.

If the well were filled up, easy as that process no doubt had been, considering the quantity of the castle ruins that lay ready at hand for the purpose, it would be weeks of labour before it could be cleared out again.

"That's over," said Jonas Brand.

But there was a gloomy feeling of discontent in his mind that he should have come so far and ridden so hard for nothing, and he stood gazing at the closed well in deep cogitation.

Then Jonas Brand set down his lantern on the little coping stone that surrounded the hollow in the ground that indicated that there a well had been, and drawing a short hanger that he wore, he dug its point as deeply as he could in the green turf.

An exclamation burst from the lips of Jonas Brand—an exclamation of satisfaction.

The point of the hanger had certainly touched some woodwork.

"I know all about it now," he said, "the well is only covered over with planking, and turf has been placed upon that again."

Jonas was right. By removing the turf he came upon some thick oaken planks, which, by their half-charred ends, showed they had belonged to the castle. They were easily lifted aside. And there was the well.

"Dry or wet?" said Jonas Brand, as, crouching down over the deep black chasm, he slowly, one by one, dropped some pebbles down, and then listened to the sound they might make.

So still was the old ruin, so hushed was the whole neighbourhood, that the slightest reports from below must have reached the ears of that attentive listener.

There was a grim smile of satisfaction on the face of Jonas as he scrambled to his feet again, and uttered the one word,—

"Dry!"

He had no doubt about it. The well was dry, and the descent would be easy enough. But Jonas Brand had heard of foul air congregating in such places, and he knew that it would not be safe to go down until he was assured that the breath of life would not be taken from him by mephitic gases. He knew, too, that what will support combustion in the shape of flame will support life; so Jonas set to work providing for his own safety.

He tied the lantern to the end of the rope he had with him, and he slowly let it down into the well.

As he let the rope go through his fingers he made a rough estimate of its length by counting it off in feet, as nearly as he could guess.

At the number forty-five the rope slacked.

The lantern had reached the bottom of the well.

Then Jonas Brand began to haul up.

The light was still burning.

"All is well," he said. "Forty-five feet is no great depth to go, and by the light burning, I have no doubt that the old well-shaft is ventilated in some way that one cannot see from the top. It will be all right."

His arm, that had received an injury, pained him a little, but Jonas Brand was a man of great physical endurance, and he would not let it hinder him.

Securely between two of the coping, or edge stones of the well, he fixed the iron hooks he had brought with him. To them then he tied the rope. The lantern he fastened to his waist.

Then down went Jonas Brand.

At the moment that he fairly disappeared beneath the surface, a pale anxious face peered round one of the old ruined walls of the castle.

A hand then, and an arm—the hand was clenched—made threatening gestures in the air toward the well. A voice muttered some maledictions.

The face was that of Mr. Ambrose the jeweller, of Ludgate Hill.

Ambrose had reached the castle about half an hour after Jonas Brand, and just as] Jonas's scientific experiments in regard to the quality of the air in the well were satisfactorily concluded, so that from that point he had been a spectator of the whole proceedings.

And now, crouched low down—crouching like some huge reptile—Mr. Ambrose approached the [spot and listened. He heard strange noises down the well. There came up from its depths a faint flickering light. A voice as if from the bowels of the earth awakened an odd echo in the old ruins.

"I have it," said the voice.

"Ah!" ejaculated Ambrose, "he—has—it."

Boom! At that moment came a morning gun, fired from some ship at sea.

The report echoed in a strange, rattling, disconnected fashion from hill to hill of the whole line of coast.

"He comes!" gasped Ambrose.

He, with trembling hands, drew a knife—a long, sharp knife—from a sheath that was fitted into a pocket of his coat, made expressly for it. He comes!

The rope was agitated.

The faint light from the well increased each moment. There was a dull, scraping noise. The head of Jonas Brand appeared, but his face was in the direction away from Ambrose; with amazing strength and skill he was climbing the rope. Something was slung around his neck—a valise. Yes; a valise of blackened leather. He unloosened it from his neck. With one hand he tossed it out of the well on to the rank grass.

"There!" he said.

"And there!" said Ambrose, as he with one blow of his knife severed the rope. Jonas Brand wrenched round his head and saw his enemy. Then, with a shriek that echoed fearfully among the old ruins, down he went.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE VALISE REACHES ITS RIGHT OWNER.

In the excitement of the moment—wrought up to a pitch almost of frenzy from fear, as he was, Mr. Ambrose echoed from his own lips the fearful shriek with which Jonas Brand plunged to the bottom of the dry well at old Corfe Castle.

Then there was another half-stifled, agonized cry from deep down in the well—something like a half-wail and half-sob; and the fancy of the jeweller—for he was quite a man of imagination was Mr. Ambrose—made him think that he heard the splash of bones and blood and mangled flesh with which the thief-taker reached the bottom.

And still crouched down in the same attitude in which he had been when he cut the rope, Mr. Ambrose remained, looking pale and ghastly—his eyes staring, his lips contracted, and the knife held up threateningly, as though he thought it possible that Jonas Brand might yet find power and means to crawl up the sides of the well and engage with him in a combat of life and death.

And that man—that Mr. Ambrose, the jeweller, who could in cool blood join the plot for the destruction of Alice at the hands of the hangman, was appalled because he had himself to be the executioner in the case of Jonas Brand.

His coward soul was all aghast when he himself had a deed of death to do, but he would scarcely have felt a pang if, on that fearful Monday morning when Alice was taken to Tyburn, she had been legally strangled there and then, in accomplishment of the objects of Sir Bernfide Esperance, and for his co-partnership in which he (Mr. Ambrose) had received a fee of one thousand pounds.

The cold perspiration rolled in large drops from his brow, and the damp of death appeared for a time to take possession of his limbs.

Still he crouched down by the well, with his right arm upraised to strike.

And the dawn came.

The young day—the advent of which had been proclaimed by that gun at sea—slowly stole out of the heavens, and a soft grey light began to creep about the old ruins of Corfe Castle.

Far away eastward the horizon of waters was dappled with faint colours. Long cloudy islands of dusky green appeared to rest upon the crests of the rippling waves. Then in flashes there shot over the water brighter tints—some a greyish yellow, others with a soft, roseate hue, like the inner surface of some Indian shell; and then a gilt streak glittered and glimmered over the sea, and the first long pencil of sunlight shone upon hill, and tree, and stream, and pebbly beach.

The dawn had come.

Then Ambrose drew a long breath, and looked about him on the ruin, and on a bright streak of light that came through a crack far above his head.

A bird then perched on the topmost pinnacle of the old castle sang sweetly and twitteringly as it plumed itself in the sun's first rays. One of those glorious days of autumn was coming which at times redeem the English climate from all its bitterness.

And in the well all was still.

Still as death could be.

"He is dead! He must be dead!" gasped Ambrose. "God! what a cry he gave!"

On the opposite side of the well, just clear of the brink of it, lay the much-coveted valise, all green and yellow with damp and mould. But there it was. And there was he, Mr. Ambrose, the sole possessor of it; and that, too, without having had the trouble, the risk, and the terror of descending the well to get it.

There was deep congratulation in that.

Ambrose tried to smile as he thought of it, but a hideous contortion of coun-

tenance was all that he could produce.

Then he inclined his head on one side, and listened at the well's brink.

Not a sound—not a sigh.

Dead! dead!

But he wanted to be so very sure about it; so he looked about him, and presently he saw a fragment of the castle—a large, jagged-cornered, awkward piece of rock. It might weigh some hundred and fifty pounds—of course he could not lift it, but he could push it, roll it, propel it, in some fashion, along.

And he did so. Right to the brink of the well.

Then he toppled it over.

With a hideous sort of crash it reached the bottom.

Mr. Ambrose placed both hands over his ears. He was afraid some yell of mortal agony would come up from Jonas Brand, as this rough, jagged piece of rock would grind into his flesh and bones.

No. All was still.

Jonas Brand was past being hurt by pieces of rock.

"Ah!" said Ambrose, "I am satisfied now."

He then began to look about him with some coolness—some judgment, and he soon saw how the well had been opened by Brand.

The idea came strangely across him that it would be far better for him to restore the well to the state it seemed as if it had been in before Jonas's visit, than to have it thus staring open with that dead man at the bottom of it. So he set to work.

He replaced the woodwork. He covered it over again with the turf. He removed the iron hooks from between the stones.

Then he patted the whole down as well as he could.

Jonas was buried.

"It's a kind of family vault," said Ambrose. "The world will see him no more."

Then he lifted the valise.

It was a small one—such, indeed, as might without difficulty have been strapped on to a horse's back. Despite the mould and the decay that were about it, there was ample evidence of it having been made in a costly manner. Mr. Ambrose looked at it with intense interest.

A question arose in his mind.

Wouldn't it be better to open it there and then, and take out its contents, and stow them about him in his various pockets, or take the whole valise as it was to town?

He decided upon the latter plan.

"Yes," he said, "it will be better. I will take a good look, though, at what it contains, before Sir Bernfido Esperance shall be aware that I have returned. And now to London with what speed I may. I am rid of that Jonas Brand, too, who was such a pest."

Mr. Ambrose, having got over his fright, was beginning to congratulate himself.

The day had come, broad, bright, and beautiful, by the time he reached the village, but he passed across a field or two, and avoided Corfe. He had told the lugger to wait for him in the bay, and he was soon in sight of it.

"All is well—all his well," he said. "All well and all successful. I shall soon be in London. I feel quite light of heart now with such success."

Mr. Ambrose was getting more decidedly pleased every moment. He was quite forgetting that hideous spectacle at the bottom of the well in Corfe Castle—that man with a jagged piece of rock resting upon him.

He was, in fact, was this jeweller and murderer, quite sprightly and facetious when he reached the fishing-lugger; and whereas on his course to Corfe Castle he had been gloomy and taciturn to such an extent that the boatmen had thought him some person flying from the law, they now, in his changed aspect, did not know what to think of him.

And so Mr. Ambrose, sitting serene and happy in the stern of the lugger, made his way back again to Lymington.

Then a post-chaise to London was the order at the principal inn; and while it was getting ready he partook of a capital breakfast.

The valise he had rubbed and scrubbed, and cleaned as best he could, so as to get rid of the appearance it had of having been in some wonderfully damp situation for a long time.

And again the notion came across him that he would like there to open it and take a look at its contents; but he abstained.

"No—no!" he said. "An hotel in London, and a private room. There I shall feel more secure than I do now; not but what I am secure enough now."

Mr. Ambrose gave his head a sort of jerk in the neighbourhood of Corfe Castle as he spoke.

Yes. He was very secure now.

And so he discussed his good breakfast, and the colour came back to his cheeks, and he no more looked the man he did as he crouched down by the brink of the old well in the castle court at Corfe than any two of the most dissimilar things in nature can look like each other.

The post-chaise was ready; the postillion cracked his whip; the smiling landlord bowed from the hotel steps, and Mr. Ambrose smiled in return.

Off he went—off to London.

"What an odd old valise that was the gentleman had with him!" said the landlord of the hotel as he ascended his doorsteps.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Ambrose to himself as the chaise whirled away. "From one or the other I shall share the vast estates of the Mortons."

It was half-past eight o'clock in the morning that Mr. Ambrose started from the inn door to proceed to London.

It would, with constant relays and only necessary delays for change and refreshment, take eighteen hours to get to London: therefore he would not reach the metropolis until half-past two, or thereabout.

"Say three o'clock," said Ambrose to himself; "three o'clock in the morning. Then I shall have till daylight to thoroughly examine the valise and mature my plans. As for sleep, I can take it by snatches here in the chaise when we come to smooth, soft bits of road."

The chaise dashed on.

Through many a country town and village; through old ecclesiastical Winchester; through Basingstoke, and to London.

Mr. Ambrose had many a sound nap; and he was in the middle of one when the chaise stopped to change horses at Kingston.

Mr. Ambrose was cross.

"What the — a — a — deuce!" he said; "could you not go on to the next stage without waking me up?"

"Couldn't, sir," said the post-boy. "Horses knocked up, sir!"

"And what is that to me? Fresh horses directly, do you hear?"

"Yes, sir!"

"What's the time? Dear me, I have let my watch run down!"

"It is a quarter to one, sir," said a portly man, who was the landlord of the inn which supplied the post-horses. "Would not your worship like to sleep here for the night?"

"No—no!"

"Excellent beds, sir."

"No. I say, no!"

"And they do say, sir, that between here and town there are highwaymen."

"Bah—stuff! Drive on!"

Crack went the postillion's whip, and on went Mr. Ambrose.

Then it was a very strange thing; but from the meadows close to the banks of the river a rocket flew up into the air, and burst into a shower of brilliant particles in its descent.

Then another, at an interval of five minutes, and another five minutes after that.

Mr. Ambrose saw the last one.

"Hilloa! hilloa! Postillion, stop! What was that?"

"A rocket, sir! There was three on 'em, as I seed."

"But what are they for?"

"Don't know, sir. But they do say—"

"Well—what?"

"You hain't afeared-like, sir."

"Me afraid? Ah! Ha! ha! Afraid of a rocket! My good fellow, I am afraid of nothing!"

"Well, then, sir, they do say—"

"Well—what?"

"As the Owlet sends up them rockets."

"The Owlet?"

"Yes, the highwayman. They do say as he gets 'em sent up to let him know what road to go on to catch them as he wants to catch."

"Eh? But—but—"

"Yes, sir."

"Well—well—I—a—where is the next stage?"

"A little the other side of East Sheen, sir."

"A good house?"

"Well, sir, not at all first-rate."

"Go on—go on! Oh, it can't be any matter to us. I say, my man."

"Yes, sir!"

"Were you ever stopped by this—a—Owlet that people talk so much about?"

"Never, sir!"

"Of course—of course not. Drive on now—drive on. Don't spare the cattle. On—on!"

Mr. Ambrose leaned back in the chaise, and made himself comfortable, his head in a corner, his feet on the opposite seat, the valise by his side.

He slept.

The wheels of the chaise went deep into the soft sand of a bit of common land close to Richmond. Mr. Ambrose started wide awake.

The sudden report of a pistol-shot had, in an instant, jarred upon every nerve.

"O Lord! O Lord!" he heard the post-boy cry out.

"Halt! Quiet!" said a loud, clear voice. "Quiet, and safety! Move, and you die!"

"O good Lord!"

"Peace!"

Bang went down the window on the side of the chaise next to which Mr. Ambrose was sitting; and then by the gleam of the carriage-lamp he saw a head and a face.

The head had on it a cap with feathers, in the midst of which sparkled a ruby. The face was covered by a mask.

Mr. Ambrose shook with fear till the springs of the post-chaise creaked again.

"You are in good time," said a strange, croaking voice, that almost stopped Mr. Ambrose's blood from flowing, such an agony of fear did it throw him into.

"You are in good time, Mr. Ambrose."

The jeweller's tongue seemed to stick to the roof of his mouth, and it was only by a great effort that he was able to say,—

"In—in good time, sir?"

"Yes. I commend your diligence!"

"My diligence, sir?"

"Much. Give it to me! Your trouble is over."

"Oh, have mercy upon me! I'm a poor man—a wife, sir, and children. Have mercy!"

"What do you mean? Of what are you afraid?"

"Spare my life!"

"Your life is not threatened yet."

"I thought—that is, you—you—dear sir, you said, I thought, that my troubles were over, which generally means—means—"

"Death!"

"Oh, spare me!"

"I did not threaten. You added a final letter to the word. It was your trouble—not your *troubles*—I said was over."

"I—I—yes, sir! God bless you—thank you."

"And now I will relieve you of the valise."

Mr. Ambrose uttered a yell of agony. The valise—the valise that he had gone so far for—that he had committed murder for—that he had nursed up by his

side through so long a journey—that he had abstained from opening at Corfe Castle—that he had left intact when he was tempted to examine it at the inn—the valise that was the object of all his hopes and all his expectations, was coolly asked of him as if it were a bauble, and as if he had been just to fetch it for this man, or fiend, who was at the carriage door, and who spoke like a parrot. No wonder that the eyes of Mr. Ambrose dilated until they looked awfully prominent; no wonder that he uttered that yell which nearly set the post-horses off into a gallop.

"What is the matter?" said the horseman.

"Matter! the—the matter! Murder! fire! help!"

"Are you ill?"

"Mad—mad!"

"I thought so. But it matters not. The valise, if you please; and I thank you for your pains and your diligence."

"You? you?"

"Yes."

"But it is you who are mad. Ha! ha! A highwayman, and he sees that a valise is all my luggage. Ha! ha! Nothing in it—nothing but crusty, musty law-papers—of no use in all the world to anybody but their owner, and not much to him. Ha! ha! My purse, of course; my watch, of course. Ha!"

"Mr. Ambrose," said the horseman, "it seems to me, sir, that you must have taken leave of your senses. I send you to Corfe Castle for a valise, you kindly go to much trouble and expense to get it, and then you fancy that I would rob you. Oh no!"

"You—sent—me?"

"Yes."

"You? Then who—who——Oh, it is too absurd; and yet, how come you to know? You sent—"

"Yes, I sent you."

"Then, in the name of all that is diabolical, who are you?"

"Just so."

"Just what?" yelled Mr. Ambrose.

The horseman lifted the hat and plume from his head, and then the mask from his face.

There was the owl's head and face, beak, eyes, and ears—all perfect.

"The Owlet!" gasped Ambrose.

"Just so."

"Lost—lost!"

"No; found. It was lost at the bottom of the dry well at Corfe Castle, but it is now found. The valise—the valise, I say, that I sent you for!"

There was a rush of blood to the head of Mr. Ambrose; a cold feeling was about his heart. With a cry he slid off the seat of the chaise, and fell in a swoon on to the mat at the bottom of it.

The Owlet reached in his hand at the open window and took out the little valise.

"Postillion," he said.

"O Lord! yes, sir."

"This gentleman is Mr. Ambrose, jeweller and goldsmith, of Ludgate Hill, in the City of London. You will drive him home, and he will pay you. But, since you halted at once when I cried halt, take these."

The Owlet held out his hand.

"Your cap!" he said, "your cap!"

The postillion took off his round-crowned cap and held it, and the Owlet flung into it a handful of guineas.

"Remember me!" he said. "Come, Leo!"

Another moment and he was gone. After him, too, the postillion saw go a very large dog, which kept up pace with the coal-black horse.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE — MR. AMBROSE'S PLAN.

THE morning was fair and bright, after that night of horror to Mr. Ambrose, the jeweller. Fair and bright to all who, with honest mind and purpose, were about righteous work, but most unwelcome in its heavenly beauty to those who, amid the storm of evil pas-

sious, would rather nature had put on its gloomiest aspect than the sun of that almost supplementary summer should impart its golden beauty to old England.

It does happen sometimes, in our climate of caprices, that for a short period in the autumn of the year the sun will shine forth in its yellowest splendour; soft airs from the South will puff gently over the land; and vegetation, forgetful that the stern realities of winter must yet interpose, will start into a new life; the bud and the blossom will appear in the orchard; the geranium will flaunt its beauty in the well-kept garden; and through all the air there will be the soft feel of summer-time.

Such, then, was the aspect of the morning after the encounter of the Owlet with the jeweller, when a carriage drove up to the door of the house in St. James's Square, which had been, in so singular a fashion, made over to the occupation of Gerald Alton and Alice.

From this carriage there alighted, with all the easy *nonchalance* of a young man of fashion, the Owlet, in his undress uniform as an officer of the Guards.

There was a smile upon his face as he gave some brief directions to the driver of the carriage, and then he took something from the interior of the vehicle, which looked like an old, black, mouldy parcel.

That was *the* valise.

An immense dog walked into the hall of the house after the Owlet.

"This is a friend of mine," he said to the hall porter, as he patted the dog on the head. "He will, I am sure, be made very welcome by Mr. Alton, your master; and he will sit down here in the hall by you, and wait for me."

"Dear me, sir, what a fine dog!" said the hall porter.

"He is indeed."

"Perhaps, sir, he—he won't be contented here with me."

"Oh yes. His name is Drift."

"Drift, sir?"

"Yes. You will stay here, Drift, for me—here. You understand, Drift?"

The dog looked at the Owlet for a moment, and then quietly and composedly sat down by the side of the hall porter, who, however, did not seem to be quite well assured of the continued pacific intentions of an animal as large and almost as powerful as a lion.

Then the Owlet, with the valise in his hand, walked slowly up the principal staircase of the house, and made his way to that room in which there were the gilt furniture and the silk hangings.

The room was empty, but the Owlet went to a particular portion of the wall, and pressed his fingers upon what looked like the head of a nail.

Probably some spring was touched which struck a bell; for in a few seconds one of the tall, secret doors in the panelling of the room was cautiously opened, and the abbé peeped into the apartment.

"Come in," said the Owlet.

The abbé made a very low bow, and came into the room.

He spoke in his softest and lowest tones as he said,—

"May I hope that your Majesty is quite well, and that all has turned out according to your Majesty's wishes?"

"Yes, abbé; but you had better not call me 'majesty' yet. I am what I seem always. You see my uniform, and with it I am Ensign Harold Blanchard, of the Coldstream Guards."

The abbé bowed low again.

"Is Annie well?"

"Her royal highness is quite well."

"Good. You will now, abbé, summon to me Mr. Alton and Mrs. Alton, as she is called, but in reality the Countess of Morton. I have, I hope and expect, in this valise—which has cost far less trouble to procure than I could ever have imagined—the proofs of her claim to the title and estates of the Mortons."

"Your Majesty could create a Countess of Morton without proofs."

"Yes; but it will be more satis-

factory by far to the countess to have her claim put in such a form that she will feel she owes it to her regular descent rather than to the favours of a king."

The abbé bowed again.

"In regard," added the Owlet, "to Mr. Gerald Alton, we can easily confer upon him a patent of nobility when the proper time comes."

The abbé made no remark, but with another low bow he left the room.

In five minutes more both Alice and Gerald were with the Owlet.

The Owlet smiled as he shook hands with them, and pointed to the valise.

"I hope, Alice," he said, "that you will there find cause to blame us if we presume to name you other than Countess of Morton."

"And is it possible," exclaimed Alice, "that that can be the valise from the well at Corfe Castle?"

"I firmly believe it is."

"And you, dear friend," said Gerald, "have you been to encounter the trouble and the risk of procuring this valise because you knew that it was important to our fortunes?"

"Not exactly. Trouble I have had but little, risk none at all. At another time I will amuse you with an account of how I became possessed of this valise. Let it suffice for the present that I have it, and that I did not go down a well in Corfe Castle for it. I generally get our enemies to do any such work as that."

"Our enemies, sir?"

"Yes; but we waste what may possibly be precious time; and, indeed, I have much to think of and much to do."

A slight shade of sadness passed across the face of the Owlet as he spoke; but he appeared then, by a sudden effort, to shake it away. He looked at Gerald and Alice with his old, familiar smile; in which, by the way, there was even a slight touch of melancholy.

"Who," he said, "shall open this valise?"

"Shall I, dear Alice?" said Gerald.

"Yes, Gerald."

The valise was locked and strapped securely; and Gerald turned it twice over, without being well able to make up his mind how to open it.

The Owlet smiled again.

"Come, now," he said, "let me advise the shortest way of opening such a case as this."

He turned the valise completely over, and with his sword he cut the bottom of it open along its entire length.

"There," he said, "it is but the casket in which we expect to find a jewel."

Gerald eagerly pulled out the contents of the valise.

Old musty papers, letters, the title-deeds of a small estate, which had been given from the patrimonial property to the Honourable Captain Morton by his brother the earl, some medals and stars for foreign service in the wars of the Low Countries, and a small tin case tied round with crimson ribbon.

"I fancy," said the Owlet, "that in this case will be what we want."

Alice's eyes were filled with tears as she saw these words of her dead father brought to light, and she could scarcely speak.

Gerald's hands shook so much that he could not open the tin case.

"Permit me," said the Owlet, and he at once opened the case.

There was a small gold locket containing a miniature.

"Her mother!" said the Owlet. "How like!"

"My mother!" cried Alice; and her eyes ran over with tears as she looked at the miniature.

"Yes, yes."

"And you, dear friend, you knew her?"

"I did; that is, I have seen her."

"And you think this miniature is like?"

"It is indeed."

"But you did not tell me that you knew my mother, dear sir."

"No. But I do not think that I need any longer keep secret from you,

Alice, that your mother and mine were sisters."

Alice uttered an exclamation.

Gerald looked deeply interested.

"Yes," added the Owlet, "what I am telling you is a matter in which you may rely; although it is not, I warn you, all that I hope to be able to tell you soon. There were two sisters; and one married your father, the Honourable Captain Morton, the brother of the Earl of Morton; the other married my father."

"And who was he?" asked Alice, in the most innocent manner in the world.

A faint, sad smile came over the face of the Owlet as he replied,—

"Dear cousin Alice, I cannot just yet tell you that. You will understand that both the marriages were secret ones—your father's and my father's. I am still seeking for legal proof of my legitimacy. You have been seeking for proof of yours, and, if I mistake not, here it is."

A small folded paper was in the tin case along with the miniature. The Owlet unfolded it as he spoke, and cast his eyes hastily over it.

"Yes," he added; "a properly attested certificate of your father's marriage with your mother, at the Hague, by the chaplain to the stadtholder. Dear cousin and countess, I give you joy!"

"And my mother was Alice Salisbury?"

"The Lady Alicia Salisbury was her name. I fancy, too, that your real name should be Alicia. But you are the Countess of Morton in your own right."

A slight flush of colour came to the face of Gerald as he said,—

"My Alice, you might have made a nobler alliance than the poor apprentice of a jeweller."

"No, Gerald, no. Do not say so. My noblest choice is the noblest heart; and nature has granted you, dear Gerald, a patent of nobility in soul and thought and purpose that kings might envy."

"That is well," said the Owlet; "and yet titles go for something in the world; and we must see what we can do for Gerald in that way on the first opportunity. At present, dear Alice, I would have you rest contented that you are in possession of the important document. There will come a time soon, I hope, when it may be produced; and then justice will be done to you."

"We will wait your pleasure, sir, in all things," said Gerald.

"It is well. You will lose nothing by so waiting. Your uncle, Alice, the present Earl of Morton, is insane, and the inmate of an asylum. Sir Bernfido Esperance has seized upon the family estates; and hence he was desirous of your death."

"The villain!" exclaimed Gerald.

"True. There does not, I believe, exist a greater villain in all the world than that man; but, if I mistake not, he now lies at the point of death, at Mr. Ambrose's, the jeweller; and there let him lie for a few days. I am occupied with an affair that, until I now see the end of, will engross me fully."

The Owlet's mind seemed each moment to be getting more and more preoccupied, and he now paced the large apartment with disordered strides.

The task that he had set himself in the council-chamber—to free the throne of its then occupant—was beginning to press heavily upon him.

"You are disturbed, dear friend," said Gerald. "Is there anything in the world that I can do to aid you?"

"Nothing—nothing."

"If, however, it should be possible for me to be of any kind of assistance, you can scarcely guess what pleasure it would be, both to me and to our dear Alice, to make some attempt to prove our gratitude."

"I am sure of that! I am sure of that!"

At this moment there came a low, cautious tap at the door of the apartment—that is to say, the ordinary door of it, and not at any of its secret entrances.

The Owlet stepped back a pace, and plunged his hand into the breast of his apparel as if he had there some concealed weapon of defence.

And so in truth he had, for he knew not at what moment some *mal-à-propos* circumstance might occur to place him in imminent danger.

It was the abbé, though, only, who appeared.

"Oh! it is you?"

"Yes, your—"

"Ah!"

The abbé bowed low, and then added:

"Yes, Mr. Blanchard. Yes, it is I."

"That is well."

"I have come to say that there is a man in the hall who, strangely enough, asked to see Mr. Alton, and who has been trying to question the hall porter concerning the inhabitants of the house."

"Indeed?"

"No one can know I am here," said Gerald.

"Nor I," said Alice, "for I have not been without the house."

The Owlet considered for a moment or two and then said,—

"Let this valise and all that it contains be removed into the next apartment."

"Yes, yes," said Gerald, "I will take charge of them."

"Do so. And you, abbé, ascertain who and what the man is. And then I think Mr. Alton should see him, for our object is not—to—to bring suspicion on the house."

Gerald and Alice glanced at each other, and then Gerald said, in a tone of entreaty,—

"Oh, kind and good friend, to whom we owe so much, if you would only trust us."

"I dare not yet."

Gerald bowed and was silent.

The abbé came back.

"The man says his name is Ambrose."

"Ambrose!" exclaimed Gerald.

"Ambrose," faltered Alice.

"The jeweller," said the Owlet.

The abbé looked from one to the other of them, and stoutly rubbed his old shrivelled hands together.

"What can he want here?" said Alice.

"Some villany, of course," said the Owlet. "Let me think. Yes. That will do."

The Owlet remained in thought a few moments more, and then he said, freely and rapidly,—

"Gerald, you will see this man in this room?"

"Yes, sir."

"You will then find out what he comes for. It is most likely some villany about the valise; but do not on any account own that you have it, or that you have seen it."

"I will not."

"You will comprehend that, for the sake of confounding the villain—of catching him, so to speak, in his own snare, I shall be a listener to all that passes; and when you hear a slight tinkling sound, which will be in reality a clock playing an air, you will, on any excuse you like, leave Ambrose alone in this room."

"I will."

"Then all the rest I will arrange, and you will be free of him once and for all. Alice, will you return to your own room? Pardon me for assuming such mastery in the house, dear cousin."

"We rather feel more gratitude," said Alice, "for all your goodness."

A few minutes then, and the valise and its contents were removed. Then the Owlet watched until Gerald was out of the apartment for a moment, conducting Alice to her room, and he touched a spring that opened one of the secret panels, and passed through.

The abbé bowed profoundly; and when Gerald returned, he was rather surprised to find the abbé in such an attitude of obeisance to the wall merely, as it appeared to him.

"Abbé?"

"Eh? Oh!"

"I will now see this man."

The abbé slided out of the room; and, in a few moments, pale, haggard,

and half dead with the fatigue, the fright, and the mental commotion he had gone through, Mr. Ambrose appeared.

Ambrose had evidently quite made up his mind what course of action to pursue; and he put on a sickly smile as he held out his hand, which Gerald paid no attention to, and said,—

"No doubt, my dear Gerald, you are quite surprised to see me, your old master, here—hem! Well, some explanation is due to me from you, and from me to you. You see I watched Timber, or rather I got somebody to watch him, to this house. Well, when I got somebody to find out that you it was who resided here, and that you were actually married to Alice Home, my dear boy, I congratulate you—I do indeed—hem! Well, do you know I have found out that that Sir Bernfide Esperance is a terrible rogue."

"Indeed, sir."

"Yes, my dear boy—hem—yes. And what is more, I have found out that Alice is his—his cousin, I suppose, and the real heiress to the estates of the Morton family. Now I—I, my dear boy, only can help her unto the possession of them! Sir Bernfide offers me half the estates if I help him! Here is the deed to that effect; but I would rather help you and Alice. Come, will you do the same?"

A slight tinkling noise came upon the still air of the room, and Mr. Ambrose started. It was a French waltz being played by a clock.

"Eh! What is that?"

"Only a clock, Mr. Ambrose! If you will wait for me here, you will soon have an answer."

"To be sure—to be sure! Consult Alice—consult Alice! To be sure! But of one thing be assured, that I, and I only, can help you to the titles and estates of Morton, if you make terms with me."

Gerald bowed slightly and left the room.

CHAPTER XXV.

SIR BERNFIDE ESPERANCE AND MR. AMBROSE ARE TOO CLEVER FOR EACH OTHER.

When Mr. Ambrose found himself alone in that old palatial-looking apartment, he licked his parched lips—parched with the fever of anxiety and fear, and looked curiously about him.

"A fine house indeed," he said. "Hem! A very fine house. Gerald is well lodged. I can't quite comprehend it, unless some one has taken him by the hand on account of Alice, who knows that she may become possessed of the estates of Morton. I am quite clear though now about my policy. Since the valise is gone, it is into the hands of friends of Gerald and Alice that it has so gone, or of people who will make terms with them about it; and so, as I am first in the field, if I can make a good bargain all will be well."

Mr. Ambrose was not quite sure that after all he was doing the cleverest thing, and yet it had occurred to him to do what he was now doing as a grand stroke of policy.

He had been home.

But he had not set any one to watch Timber, although he had been watched by a man in his employment, who had done so on his own account.

When, therefore, Mr. Ambrose reached his own house, which he did at a very early hour in the morning, with his heart full of disappointment and bitterness, he had abstained from seeing Sir Bernfide Esperance, but he sat down to try and arrange his thoughts as to what he had better do.

Then was it that this workman and shopman of Mr. Ambrose came to him quite full of his news, that he had observed something so peculiar about the incomings and outgoings of Timber that he had followed him, and found him go into a grand house in St. James's Square, and that, by dint of careful inquiry, he

had ascertained that a Mr. Alton lived there, who was just married.

"And indeed, sir," added the spy, "I stood by the railings opposite the house, and I saw our apprentice, Gerald Alton, and the teacher who was going to be hanged for stealing the diamond bracelet, both look out from the balcony, as grand as any duke and duchess."

That Alice had found friends and protectors was of course evident from this; and therefore, in the politic views of Mr. Ambrose, she was the person to side with now, before it should be too late.

Hence his visit to St. James's Square.

But the difficulty that Gerald had had to keep his hands off him he little knew, because he was not at all aware that Timber had been in a position to enlighten Gerald concerning his villanous compact with Sir Bernfide Esperance. Indeed, it was only on account of the strict promise he had made the Owlet that Gerald abstained from taking summary vengeance there and then upon the jeweller.

And so Mr. Ambrose was alone, and looking about him with curious observation at everything in the apartment.

He little thought what eyes were upon him.

"Yes," he muttered, "I shall be right at last, and have nothing to fear. That Jonas Brand is dead, and there is no one else who knows anything about the whole affair but Sir Bernfide, and he lies in rather a precarious state at my house."

A strange smile flitted for a second over the face of the jeweller.

"Yes; in a very precarious state at my house. So very precarious, that if he were to drink anything that would not agree with him—ha! ha!—there would be an end of him. And he is extremely likely to do so!"

Mr. Ambrose looked pleased.

"Then I can, by siding with Alice, be certain of reward, and the death of Jonas Brand and the death of Sir Bernfide puts out of the world all evidence that I plotted or planned, or had anything to do with the other side. And as regards the bracelet, it was Sir Bernfide who rolled it up in Alice's music, not I. It was he who did it. I was compelled to prosecute. Besides, did I not recommend her to mercy? Of course I did. But that highwayman troubles me."

Mr. Ambrose shuddered as he thought of the Owlet.

"But still—still," he added, "he will produce the valise in their interests, and I will tell Gerald and Alice that, having extorted from Sir Bernfide the secret of where the valise was, I went to get it for them. I will make a good story of a dreadful fight that I will say I had with Jonas Brand, of how I was robbed by a highwayman, and so on. Oh yes. The other side dead, I shall be on the right side, and do well; only I wish to know who it is that has taken up the affair for Alice and Gerald, and placed them in this fine house."

"It is I!" said a voice.

Mr. Ambrose fell to the floor with a scream, and then on his hands and knees he glared up in the face of the Owlet.

Yes. There was the Owlet standing a few paces from him, in his full costume of a highwayman, with that fearful owl's face, and the few words he had uttered had the memorable parrot-like croak about them, that he (Mr. Ambrose) knew so well, as having heard them on the common near Richmond.

"It is I!" repeated the Owlet.

"Good God!"

"Ay, you are right."

"Right?"

"Yes."

"I, well, my dear Ow—sir. O my poor brain. I suppose I am mad."

"What do you want here?"

"What—do—I—oh! it was, my dear, good Ow—sir, it was to do good—good."

"What good?"

"Help Mr. Alton and Miss Alice Home—Miss Alice Home, in particular, to her rights."

"What rights?"

"Her title—her estates. I do believe, on my life—on my conscience, dear sir, that in the valise which I was bringing to town for them when you stopped me are important papers."

"Well?"

"Which may—which will prove that she—that is, Miss Alice Home that was—is the Countess of Morton in her own right."

"Ah!"

"And so I was very anxious—that is to say, very desirous indeed of aiding, assisting, abetting, you see, in what was right, and in restoring the young lady to her inheritance."

"When?"

"Eh? When? Oh, as soon as possible."

"I mean, when did you become anxious to restore her to her inheritance?"

"Oh, always—as soon as I knew who and what she was, my dear Mr.—a—Ow—sir."

"A lie."

"Sir?"

"A lie. You knew perfectly well who and what she was when, in conjunction with Sir Bernfido Esperance, you tried to get her hanged on a false charge of robbing you of a diamond bracelet."

"O Lord! O Lord!"

"Which you had yourself stolen, inasmuch as it belonged to the late Lady Adela Salisbury."

The hair very nearly stood up on end on Mr. Ambrose's head. His eyes glared upon the Owlet, and he opened and shut his hands convulsively.

"You—you seem—to know—"

"All!"

Mr. Ambrose groaned aloud. He beat his breast with his hands as, upon his knees before the dreaded Owlet, he still moaned.

"Yes," added the Owlet, "I do know all. Your plotting, your planning, and your scheming are all in vain. I know that you are a villain, who, for the love of gold, would have sacrificed without a pang the young, the noble, and the innocent."

"Mercy!"

"Had you mercy when you permitted that diamond bracelet to be rolled up in the music of that innocent girl, who, to procure an honest subsistence, came to your house?"

"Oh! Oh!"

"Had you mercy when she was condemned to die a terrible death at the hands of the public executioner?"

Mr. Ambrose beat his breast again.

"And when she was preserved from that fearful fate, did mercy find a place in your heart, when you still combined with Sir Bernfido Esperance to murder the poor mad Earl of Morton?"

"No—no, I did not!"

"I say you did. Do not lie to me, or it will be worse for you. I say you did—you were to do these things when that wretched man who is now hovering between life and death at your house was brought to you in the sedan chair, dabbled in his blood."

"These things—"

"Yes, you were to send to Antwerp for the learned man who was to cure him."

"Oh, you know that too?"

"You were to go to Corfe Castle and get the valise from the well."

"Yes—yes!"

"And you were to communicate with the brutal keeper of the asylum—so called—in which the mad Earl of Morton is confined, that the time had come when he was wanted to live no more."

Mr. Ambrose felt faint and sick.

"You see I do know all."

"But still you will have some mercy upon me. I am not alone in the world—I have two children! Oh, sir, for their sakes spare me!"

"Alas! poor children with such a father!"

"But—but without me they would be poor indeed. I work for them. For them, you see, sir, I strive; and if you take my life, all will be confusion for them! Oh, pray spare me, if you have one touch of pity, for my children's

sake! I see, I hear, that nothing is unknown to you. My heart trembles to ask itself who and what you are; but you are something more than human. Let me implore you then to spare me. Let me live—oh, let me live!"

"Wretch!"

"I am—I am indeed. I feel that I am, and yet you will be merciful."

"On one condition."

"Any condition—any in the world; only say what are your commands, and I will obey them as never yet slave obeyed his master."

"The condition is, that from this moment, until you are called upon by me to do so, you will let all these transactions be locked up in your own breast, and that you will not, to man, to woman, or to child, breathe one word concerning them."

"Too easy—oh, all too easy! Set me some task. Say I am to do something that will be powerful, difficult, and will require some effort."

"No—I have spoken. Now you may go, but beware! I say beware!"

Mr. Ambrose shuddered.

"In bed—at board—in the thronged streets—amid the silence and solitude of your own chamber—in the air above the earth, or in its lowest depths below, if you disobey me, I will find you, and woe be to you!"

"Oh, say no more. I will obey—indeed I will. I am your slave; I live now but to obey you. I feel stronger even with the thought that I am under your orders."

"Rise."

"Yes, yes!"

Mr. Ambrose scrambled to his feet.

"Go home now, and be silent as the grave."

"I will—I will. And—and, sir—O good sir!"

"Well?"

"What shall I say to Sir Bernfide Esperance? He will question me. He will ask me how and why it is that I have not brought the valise from Corfe Castle."

"Wait!"

"Yes, yes."

The Owlet slowly went toward the wall.

"Look from yonder window."

"Yes."

"If you so much as turn your head to glance around this room until I tell you, you are a dead man."

"I will not—I will not!

The Owlet touched the spring in the wall and was gone. The abbé was on the other side.

"Go quickly," said the Owlet. "Let the valise be tied up as best it may—but empty—and then bring it to me. Gerald Alton will give it to you."

The abbé bowed and went for the valise. The Owlet watched Ambrose, and saw that he did not make the slightest attempt to look round.

"He is thoroughly terrified," said the Owlet to himself. "The law shall deal with him in good time. It is not for me to execute its vengeance."

The abbé brought the valise.

"That is well."

The Owlet then touched the spring of the panelled door and was in the room again.

"Behold!" he said.

Ambrose looked round.

"Here is the valise. The sight of it will satisfy Sir Bernfide Esperance. It is emptied of its contents, but he will not know that. Let him have it."

"Yes—yes!"

"Now go."

"And—and—"

"What more?"

"I was only saying that you would protect me; that you look upon me now as—a—a—friend."

"Wretch, begone!"

Mr. Ambrose darted out of the room and down the staircase. He crossed the hall and was out of the house in another moment; and with the valise in his hand, he ran all the way from St. James's Square to Ludgate Hill, where he arrived so faint and so weary that he fell prostrate on the floor of his own shop. The assiduous shopman picked him up.

"Dear! dear!" he said. "What can be the matter? My dear sir, you are hurt—only say that you are hurt! Why, the learned Doctor Bergheim has only just left the house—he came all the way from Antwerp, do you know, sir, to attend on the worshipful Sir Bernfide Esperance?"

Mr. Ambrose sat upon the floor.

"Doctor Bergheim?" he said.

"Yes, sir. He and Sir Bernfide seem to be quite old friends, dear sir."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, I—I thought that perhaps you would like to know, so you see, dear sir, I just went up the stairs a little way and—and—"

"Listened?"

"Well—I—a—yes!"

"You were quite right; I did want to know if they were old friends. But now help me up. That will do. Now I have something to say to you!"

"To me, sir?"

"Yes. If ever in bed, or on a board, or in the bowels of the earth, or up in the air, you say one word, or even think a word, of what you know—beware! beware! beware! Woe! woe! woe!"

Mr. Ambrose thought he was imitating the Owlet to perfection.

The assiduous shopman turned pale.

"Lord, sir! I won't say a word!"

"Don't! Beware! beware!"

Mr. Ambrose clutched the valise in his hands and went up-stairs to Sir Bernfide Esperance.

"Timber!" called out the assiduous shopman. "Timber, I say! Timber!"

"Here you are," said Timber.

"Timber!"

"Well?"

"If ever you, by looks or winks, or nods, or words, or kicks, or in any sort of way say what you know—beware! woe! Beware of woe! Vengeance! Ah! woe! Beware!"

"Lor!" said Timber.

"No more! no more! Hush! whisht! Boo! Ha! ha! Beware!"

The assiduous shopman retired into the counting-house.

"He's gone a little mad," said Timber, with a philosophical look; "but I'll go up-stairs and hear what I can about Sir Bernfide and Mr. Ambrose, for they will be sure to have a talk together now."

Sir Bernfide Esperance's room was shaded by the blinds being carefully drawn down—only a faint sort of twilight made its way in. Sir Bernfide was better, but he felt fearfully languid, and it was quite an effort to him to raise hand or foot.

It was the loss of blood that produced this effect. A fearful quantity of the vital fluid had made its way from his veins while he was being conveyed from the common to Ludgate Hill after his wound.

And yet, despite all this languor—despite all this weakness, which reduced him almost to the helpless condition of an infant, the bad bold scheming intellect was active, and a malignant smile was on his lips.

He was muttering to himself—very faintly muttering the full designs of his soul.

"It's strange," he said. "It's very strange that I hear no more of Jonas Brand. I should have thought now that he would be sure to come. Well, well, it don't matter—not a bit, not a bit. Bergheim will soon set me up again, and then if Ambrose does but bring the valise, in which I feel quite sure will be found the marriage certificate of Alicia Salisbury, all will go capitally. Oh, if I could only see that valise, I think it would give me new blood, and then—ha! And then! O God!"

He had moved slightly, and the wound felt a pang that was terrible.

"And then if I can only get Ambrose to take ever so little of this nice and pleasant-looking potion that Bergheim, my old friend, has let me have for him, why, he is a dead man, and the deed he has that shares the estates with him, he may take to the grave for all I care. Fool! idiot! Did he think that I would share with him

that which I have striven for during my life? No, no, no! What is that?"

Sir Bernfide heard the fall of Ambrose into the shop below; but as no other sound succeeded it, he thought it some accidental noise merely.

"Yes," he added, "I think the plan is good. It is quite impossible for Alice to substantiate her claim without the certificate which is in the valise, for all the persons who were present at the marriage, or knew anything of it, are dead; and I myself have tampered with the Registry at the Hague in such a manner that no vestige of such a marriage is there to be found in the way of a record. But it was there fair enough."

What was that again? Another noise came upon his ear. It was a door shutting sharply. He listened for a time, but all was still. He did not know that Mr. Ambrose was slowly creeping up the stairs with the valise.

"Ah," he added, "I must just see the valise, and then I will get him to take a little of the syrup, and all will be over with him. Bergheim warrants it a certain poison in ten minutes, and so it is well worth the thousand pounds I have promised him for it."

"What is he muttering about?" whispered Ambrose to himself, as he paused at the door of the chamber with the valise in his hand.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DIET DRINK AND THE SYRUP.

Sir Bernfide Esperance spoke in much too low a tone for Mr. Ambrose to hear him.

"I can't make out what he says," he whispered. "Well, it don't matter. He won't say much long. I must and will get rid of him."

Mr. Ambrose then went up another flight of steps to his own room; he carried the valise with him; he unlocked a cupboard in that room of his above; it was exactly above Sir Bernfide's chamber, and he took from it a small vial. There was about a tablespoonful of a white liquor in the vial.

"That will do," said Mr. Ambrose. "He was taking a diet-drink when I left. It will not be difficult to decant this into it, and then—good night to Sir Bernfide Esperance. I must and will be rid of him."

"Some one overhead," said Sir Bernfide, as he heard the footfall, light though it was, of Mr. Ambrose in the room above. "That old wretch who is employed to nurse me, I suppose, and who has been drunk ever since—robbing the house, I should not wonder. Well, it don't matter to me. Not a bit, not a bit. I wonder if I shall get him to take the syrup?"

Mr. Ambrose had just commenced his descent from above.

"I wonder," he said, "if I shall get him to take the diet-drink?"

But a little circumstance had taken place before Mr. Ambrose's time to come down-stairs to Sir Bernfide's chamber.

Timber had made his way to its door, and after listening for a few moments, he had got down on his hands and knees and crawled into the room, and right under the bed. The absurd-looking leather smalls just disappeared as Mr. Ambrose reached the door.

Timber, from experience, knew what a capital post of observation he was in; and, in fact, the hangings were so voluminous, and the bedstead so large and old and dark, and the room so shaded, that had any one tried to look for an eavesdropper, Timber might not have been seen.

"Hem!" said Mr. Ambrose, as he reached the threshold of the door, and then he added, "What a fool I am! He might have been asleep."

"Eh?" cried Sir Bernfide—"who is there?"

"Ah, he is awake! My dear Sir Bernfide, it is I."

"Ah, Ambrose!"

"Exactly—and I rejoice to hear you speak so well."

"Oh, my dear friend, I don't speak well. I am weak. I am very weak, but it is the sound of your voice that has revived me a little. That is all. Pray come forward to the light, that I may see you."

Ambrose did so, and held up the valise before the eyes of Sir Bernfide, who thereupon uttered a cry of joy.

"You see—you see!"

"I do! I do! You have got it. O Ambrose! you are a capital fellow."

"To be sure I am."

"You are indeed. You bring me new life by the sight of that treasure. It is from Corfe?"

"It is from Corfe."

"My dear Ambrose!"

"My dear Sir Bernfide!"

"Give me your hand."

"With pleasure."

"Oh! oh! You shook me."

"I forgot. Your wound won't bear shaking hands."

"No matter. I am delighted. Did you get it easily?"

"No."

"No?"

"Why, I can't say I did, my dear Sir Bernfide."

"Let me touch it—let me feel it. Ah! cold and damp, mouldy. You—you have not—eh? opened it?"

"Not I."

"On your word?"

"On my word. It is yours, and yours only. Take it. I will place it at the head of your bed, and then you will know that you have it in perfect safety. Let me. Oh, I am sure you will feel pleased, and get well all the sooner by having it there."

"I shall."

"There—there."

Mr. Ambrose, as he leant over the side of the bed to place the valise, likewise bent over the small round table, on which was the diet-drink, and other matters and medicaments, in jugs and bottles.

He dexterously decanted the white liquor from the little vial he had brought from his bedroom into the diet-drink, and then concealed the bottle until he could gently thrust it into his pocket.

And Sir Bernfide Esperance, commonly so sharp, so suspicious, and so clever, was so mentally dazzled by the sight of the valise that he did not see him do it.

The valise was securely wedged in between the head of the bedstead and the pillows.

"There," said Ambrose.

"I feel better already," said Sir Bernfide.

"Of course you do."

"I am delighted."

"To be sure."

"And now, my dear friend, tell me all about it."

"I will. But has Dr. Bergheim been here?"

"He has."

"And what does he say?"

"Oh, that I shall be quite well."

"How pleasant! Then all will go well."

"All—all! You will now see that the Earl of Morton is put out of the way."

"I have."

"You have?"

"I may as well tell him I have," thought Ambrose. "The more contented he feels, the more likely he is to take some diet-drink soon."

"Yes; I have done all you wished me."

"Admirable—admirable!"

"I will praise him to the echo," thought Sir Bernfide, "and then get him to taste the syrup."

"And, my dear Ambrose."

"Yes."

"Did you go down the well?"

"Oh no."

"No?"

"Certainly not. The strangest thing in the world took place. When I got to Corfe Castle, in the middle of the night, after a most toilsome journey, who should I see there but Jonas Brand."

"Jonas—Brand?"

"Yes. He had got there about half an hour before me, and was making

energetic movements to go down the well."

"And yet—"

Sir Bernfide turned his eyes upward to the valise.

"And yet, you would say, I have the valise. True—you see it."

"My dear Ambrose, I am all amazement."

"Oh, you don't know me yet. When I have a thing to do, I do it. Well, when I saw Jonas Brand there, I said to myself, 'Well and good, my fine fellow. Since you are here you may as well go down the well and get the valise, for it is not a very agreeable thing to do.'"

"You said that?"

"To myself."

"Ah!"

"And I thought that, when he brought it up, it would be my time to take it from him."

"From Jonas Brand?"

"From Jonas Brand."

"Ambrose, you are a hero!"

"Hem!"

"You astonish me."

"Well, I thought you would be a little surprised; but I will tell you."

"Do—do."

"Well, the place was awkwardly situated. The well had been covered with planks, and then turfed over, so that it looked like no well at all; but Brand had found it, and got the turf and the wood away, and there it was; and he had a rope and staples to hold it, and a lantern and all complete; and down he went."

"You watched him?"

"I watched him."

"Go on—go on."

"Down he went. In about a quarter of an hour I heard him coming up, up, up, slowly."

"Up—up!"

"Yes; up slowly till he got to the brink, and then out he sprang; upon which I stepped up to him and said, 'My dear sir, that valise which you have just brought out of that well is the very thing I want.'"

"You said that?"

"I did."

"To Jonas Brand?"

"Yes."

"Bah! boo!"

Sir Bernfide Esperance kicked in his bed, to the great agony of his wound, which then made him give a howl of pain.

"Do you doubt me?"

"Oh no, no; go on, you infernal li— I mean, you perfect hero."

"Well, thereupon we fought—a terrible conflict—for more than an hour, until at last, by a lucky push, I sent him down the well and kept the valise."

"Oh—oh!"

"Then I flung on top of him a jagged piece of the old ruins of the castle; and covering the well with the boards and turf again, I patted all down smooth, and came away, and here I am."

Sir Bernfide Esperance raised himself painfully a little way on his arm, and looked at Ambrose and then at the valise.

"Well?" said the jeweller.

"Ambrose."

"What now? Have I not done well?"

"Is there one word of truth in all this?"

"Truth, Sir Bernfide?"

"Yes. Is there one word?"

"Why, it is all true; and when you see the valise, I do think that your doubts hardly become you."

"What is this on the side of it? a plate? Ah! I see: the arms of the Mortons. It is right. Ambrose, I don't know what to think or what to say to you; but if, in addition to bringing me this valise, you have really and truly left Jonas Brand in the well at Corfe Castle, you are the cleverest fellow I ever knew."

"Oh, he is there."

"It is true, I was only wondering what had become of him."

"Wonder, then, no longer. He is not lost."

"Not lost?"

"No, because you know where he is."

"You are facetious as well as brave, Ambrose. I don't know another man in all England who could have done all this so well."

"You flatter me."

"Not at all—not at all. And not the least favour and kindness you have done me has consisted in the prompt manner in which you have sent for Dr. Bergheim, who brought with him an invaluable syrup, a few drops of which in water—I have it here—acts as such a restorative that let a man be ever so hurt, ever so weak, ever so weary, ever so sad, ever so perplexed, it revives, comforts, and upholds him."

"Indeed!"

"It has saved me from death; for he swears to me that I have not a quart of blood left in my veins."

"You don't say so."

"Yes. Here it is."

"The syrup?"

"Yes. I keep it close to my hand so that it should be safe. Ah, invaluable medicament! well I know that Bergheim alone possessed the secret of your preparation, or I would not have sent to Antwerp for him."

"Is it agreeable?"

"Delightful, because you know what good it does."

"It looks clear and bright."

"Mind—mind, don't spill it."

"I won't. I am not strong just now—I am very weary, as you may well imagine."

"Come—come, put it down."

"But—"

"Put it down, I say. I tell you, man, that I can get no more of it; and it is life to me. I want every drop of it myself."

"I should like just to taste it."

"No—no."

"Nay, Sir Bernfide, if, after all I have done for you you won't give me one dose of your wonderful restorative, it is strange indeed."

"But—but—. Well, you certainly have brought me the valise. Don't take much of it. You have certainly got me rid of Jonas Brand. Hold—hold!"

"It is pleasant."

"Very."

"I have not taken much."

"And yet enough."

"Eh?"

"Enough, I say, to make you a new man soon, my dear Ambrose."

"Ah!"

"Why do you sigh?"

"Did I sigh?"

"Indeed you did."

"I was unconscious of it. Ah!"

"There, again!"

Ambrose pressed one hand over his eyes for a moment, and then he said,—

"Does your wonderful syrup induce sleep?"

"Well—a—yes."

"Because—because—I feel——Is it late?"

"No."

"Yes. It is getting dark. Perhaps a storm—yes, a storm. I hear it raging. O God!"

"What is the matter?"

"What is this—what is this? All dark. What strange, rolling masses! Mountains come over me. Help—help!"

"Silence, fool!"

"Help!"

Sir Bernfide made a wonderful effort, and flung his pillow at Ambrose.

"Ah! God—God! I feel it, know it now. I am—I—I am poisoned!"

"Of course you are. Ha! ha! Did you think, poor fool, to play at such edge-tools with me as half my fortune? Ha! ha! Good—good! Why, you are half dead—now your legs are dead."

"Dead—dead!"

"Now your arm—now your heart!"

With a stifled groan Ambrose fell on his face on the floor.

"Dead altogether," said Sir Bernfide. "They will bring it in apoplexy. Ha! ha! The valise mine, and Jonas Brand dead, and Ambrose dead, and I fast recovering from my wounds! All will be right now; all mine—all mine! A drop of the diet-drink. I must keep myself cool, and nice, and comfortable."

Sir Bernfide licked his lips after he had taken the drop of the diet-drink

"A new flavour," he said, "a decidedly new flavour. Why, why—eh?"

Like some hideous spectre Ambrose struggled from the floor. There was blood upon his lips—blood oozing out of his eyes—blood upon his hands. He uttered one awful yell, and clutched Sir Bernfide by the beard and hair. His blood-stained lips were pressed into the very cavity of his ear as he yelled,—

"The diet-drink is poisoned! Ha! ha!"

Then Sir Bernfide screamed aloud.

There was a rush of people from the shop below.

Sir Bernfide screamed again, and tried to shake off the dead body of Ambrose—for he was dead now; but he could not get the dead hands disentangled from his hair.

Despite his wound, despite all the rapidly accumulating agony of the poison, he rolled out of bed, still in the death clutch of the jeweller.

Once more he screamed with awful vehemence, and then he rolled over on the floor.

The terrified workmen and shopmen flung the door of the chamber open. Timber emerged from beneath the bed, and set off at a wild pace for St. James's Square.

Both Sir Bernfide Esperance and Mr. Ambrose, the jeweller, were dead; but they held each other in so firm a mutual clutch that they could not be separated.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE LADY ADELA AND THE OWLET.

Breathless with the speed he had made, and in a state of great excitement from the terrible scene, of which he had been the only witness, at the jeweller's house on Ludgate Hill, poor Timber reached St. James's Square.

To make but one wild rush into the hall, and to call aloud upon the name of Gerald, were actions so at variance with the usual staid and orderly habits of Timber, that the Owlet, who was slowly descending the grand staircase, felt certain that something extraordinary had happened."

Timber had been mentioned to him both by Gerald and by Alice, so that he had no difficulty in his recognition.

"Gerald! I want Gerald!" cried Timber. Oh dear! oh dear! that a fellow should see such things, and hear such things, and then be obliged to dream about 'em all his life!"

Timber wrung his hands and wept. The terrible deeds he had been a witness to had been too much for his sensitive organization, and it would be long before he would recover the even serenity of his mind.

"Come with me," said the Owlet, in his soft and gentle tones, "I will take you to Mr. Alton."

"Yes, sir—yes. To Gerald."

"Yes, to Gerald. Come."

Timber was trembling in every limb, but he followed the Owlet up the grand staircase of that stately mansion.

The Owlet took him through two rooms, and then tapped at the door of a third. A voice called out, "Come in!" and the Owlet opened the door, and taking Timber by the arm, he led him in, saying,—

"I fancy, Gerald, that our young friend here has something more than commonly interesting to tell you."

"Ah, it is you, Timber."

"Yes, Mr. Gerald. They are both dead!"

"Dead? Who?"

"Mr. Ambrose and Sir Bernfide Esperance."

"Ah!" said the Owlet. "Is it so? I am not surprised, however. Tell your tale, my boy, and be calm and cool, and speak low and gently."

The calm serenity of the Owlet seemed to have all the effect of a sedative upon the nervous system of Timber, who was able, with a tolerable degree of composure, to relate all that had happened at the jeweller's house.

"This is retribution," said Gerald.

"It is indeed," added the Owlet. "So that episode is over, and Alice will have but little difficulty in the sub-

stantiation of her rights; but still you will keep to our agreement, Gerald, and wait yet for a short time."

"I will in all things do as you wish. And as for you, Timber, the house at Ludgate Hill is no place for you now."

"No—no. I—I will go back, then, to the workhouse."

Timber rested his head on his hand, and sobbed aloud.

"Treason!" said the Owlet, with a smile at Gerald. "Treason, is it not, to friendship and to feeling?"

"It is indeed. Timber, my friend, do you think for a moment that I will let you go back to the workhouse? Are you not my dear friend? Will you desert me now, after being so kind to me? No, Timber, I am sure you will not. You will stay with me, and my house will be your home, and my fortunes your fortunes, Timber."

The boy looked up. He was but a boy—almost a child, and the young heart had its own dictates. He flung his arms round Gerald's neck, and laid his head upon his breast.

"Dear—dear Gerald!"

The metal badge of the parish that was on Timber's coat fell hard and harsh against the silken vest of Gerald Alton, but he returned Timber's caress for all that.

"I am glad of all this," said the Owlet. "A fair day to you both, and much happiness. I am now about to make a short journey, and shall not see you, Gerald, until sunset to-morrow. Farewell."

"Can I not be of some use to you? Shall I go with you, sir?"

"No—no! Farewell until to-morrow."

The Owlet again slowly descended the stairs, and reached the hall.

The great dog was there.

"Come, Drift," he said. "Come with me."

Drift made but one bound into the street, and they left the house together.

The Owlet then took his way to a table in the neighbourhood, and asked for his horse. In a few minutes Leo was brought out to him.

Drift and Leo were old friends, and the huge mastiff gambolled round the horse, and barked furiously, while Leo, who knew well that all that was just in good fellowship and friendship, looked kindly at him.

The Owlet mounted and rode off.

The dog bounded after him.

No one knew where this singular man went for the remainder of that day and for the succeeding night; but on Saturday morning he might have been seen slowly riding toward St. James's Square.

The feet of Leo were covered with dust and sandy road particles, which seemed to indicate that he had been in the country.

Drift, too, was weary and dusty.

And so they reached St. James's Square, and the Owlet entered the mansion he had made over to Gerald and Alice.

They were both in the large drawing-room, and they advanced eagerly to meet him.

"Ah," said Gerald, "you have come back to stay with us now."

"Only for one hour. But I have something to say to you both."

There was a certain mournfulness about the air and manner of the Owlet which filled them with the most serious although the most vague apprehensions. They felt certain that he was on the eve of some enterprise of more than common danger and importance.

"Ah, sir," said Gerald, "if you would only confide in me, and let me see if I could be of any service to you."

The Owlet shook his head.

"I will build up," he said, "if I can, but I will not pull down."

This speech was too enigmatical for Gerald to comprehend, and he looked as if he would fain have asked for an explanation.

"Forgive me," said the Owlet, "if I fill your minds with conjectures; I cannot at present be more explicit. But there is one thing that I should like you to do, Gerald."

"And I will do it with pleasure, if it be for you."

"Come to the great gate of St. James's Palace to-night at half-past twelve, and there wait the course of events."

"The course of events?"

"Yes, you will hear from me, or of me."

"I will, sir."

"It is well. Take you, Alice, this packet; and if I am not with you, or you with me, to-morrow at mid-day, open it with your husband, and act upon its contents, for I shall be dead."

"Dead? Oh, no—no!"

The Owlet smiled faintly for a moment, and then a bright flush of colour came to his face, and fire seemed to flash from his eyes, as he added,—

"Yes, dead, or something different—so different from anything that you dream of in respect to me, that you will scarcely ever cease to wonder at Fortune's strange caprices. Now farewell, and may the choicest blessings of heaven fall upon you both!"

The Owlet turned to the door.

"One moment," said Alice. "You are my cousin, you know."

She held out her hand to him.

"Ay, truly you are my cousin," he said; "so, specially, God bless you!"

He just touched her brow with his lips, and then with a smile and a wave of his hand to Gerald he took his departure.

Tears forced themselves to the eyes of Alice as she said, mournfully,—

"We shall never see him in life again. Oh! who and what is he? and what fearful adventure is he contemplating? There is a something that sits heavy at his heart."

"There is indeed," said Gerald; "but I will obey him in all things, and I will be at the Palace gate, not only at the time he has mentioned, but before it!"

"Do so, Gerald, and I will not rest until you come back to me with news of him."

We now follow the Owlet.

Upon leaving the house in St. James's Square he went direct to the Irving stables, where Leo had been before put up, and left him there. Drift he left in the hall of the house, reclining on a mat.

And so the Owlet was alone. He then took his way to that obscure court where once before we have watched him, and made his way into the house, where he had evident means of changing his apparel.

On this occasion all he did was to put on his full dress as an ensign in the Guard; and when he emerged from the narrow court he bore no appearance of fatigue, or of having been on a journey; and he sauntered down St. James's Street toward the Palace in as easy and unconstrained a manner as any young subaltern of the Guard might.

Close to the Palace he met Ensign Hargrave.

"Ah, Harold! is that you?" said Hargrave. "Why, where on earth have you been these two days nearly?"

"On earth, you may depend."

"Yes; but you have been missed."

"No doubt of it. Folks like you and me, Hargrave, are sure to be missed. But how is Colonel Blanchard?"

"Much the same."

"Not worse?"

"Why, no. But he don't mend. That surgeon of ours says that he thinks there is something on his mind."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. And so do I."

"That's a pity, poor fellow!"

"It is; for a kinder, heartier man, and better officer does not live than Colonel Blanchard."

"That is true, Hargrave; and I don't think your expression of such an opinion will do you any harm."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing—nothing at present. I am going now to see my cousin."

"Poor fellow! you will be sure to find him at home."

"By-the-bye," added the Owlet, "have you heard how Charles Beauchamp is?"

"Better—getting well, in fact."

"I am very—glad of that." Are you on guard?"

"No. Ducie is until sunset."

"And then?"

"Then I go on until morning."

"Very good. I had leave, which expires to-morrow at mid-day."

The Owlet walked into the palace slowly, and Hargrave took his way up St. James's Street. The sentinel saluted the Owlet, who touched his hat ceremoniously, and then passing through the common guard-room, was soon in the officers' guard-chamber.

The young ensign—almost a boy—Viscount Ducie, was there on duty.

"Holloa!" he cried, "is that you, Harold Blanchard?"

"Yes, Ducie. How are you?"

"Oh, quite well, but dull—dull, you know. One must suffer though in this life."

"Suffer?"

"Yes—yes. I was a king's page for eighteen months, and now I am an ensign in the Guard. If you don't call that suffering I don't know what is."

"You will survive it, Ducie."

"Yes, thanks to a strong constitution, I may. I suppose you are going to see your cousin, the colonel?"

"You are right, Ducie. By-the-bye, you go off duty at sunset."

"Yes, and Hargrave comes on."

"But if he should not?"

"Then I should have to stay, for there are so many of our fellows on leave."

"But I am here."

"Oh yes; but Hargrave will be sure to come. He never neglects duty."

"To be sure—to be sure. But I wonder that the palace duty is left to the subalterns."

"Why, you see, my dear fellow, the Grenadier Guards will relieve us soon, and so no change has been made. The lieutenant-colonel is forced to be here to take orders from the king. Well, then, you see, the captains of the two companies who are on duty here go off, for they know they are not wanted, and the subs have to do the duty."

"Ah!—just so—just so!"

The Owlet opened the door of communication with the rooms in the occupation of Colonel Blanchard, and passed on to his bedroom.

The colonel was half asleep and moaning. An old woman was dozing by the bedside.

The Owlet touched her on the shoulder, and she started awake.

"Yes, sir, yes," she said, "more trouble!"

"Hush!"

"Oh dear, sir! I was not asleep. Indeed I was not, I assure you."

"If you were it don't matter."

"Dear me, sir, a body do get fagged."

"I am the colonel's cousin—Mr. Harold Blanchard."

"Yes, sir, if you please."

"To-night I will sit up with him, which will give you a rest."

"You are very good, sir. I'm a poor lone body, sir, and—"

"Hush! If he should know of it he will be sure to object, because he will think it will take me off my duty to-morrow. You see I am an officer."

"Yes, sir, I sees you are a *hosifer*."

"So you will say not a word about it to the colonel, and at eleven o'clock I will come here and relieve you, and you can go home till morning then; and here is a guinea."

"Oh, sir, I will say it, perhaps as should not, but you are the completest and handsomest young gentleman as ever I seed."

"Hush!—not a word! Well, colonel, how are you now?"

At the sound of the Owlet's voice, addressed thus to him, Colonel Blanchard slowly opened his eyes.

"Is it you?" he said.

"Yes—Harold."

"Ah!"

"How are you, colonel?"

"I don't recover. I am full of wild fever. I think I am dying."

"Oh no—no. I will promise you, in the most prophetic manner in the world, that you will be much better by to-morrow at noon."

"Why? Why?"

"I cannot tell you why, but it will be so."

"What a funny gentleman he is!" said the nurse.

"Nurse," said the colonel.

"Sir to you."

"I want to speak to my—my cousin. You can come back in half an hour."

The nurse left the room, and was soon in the soldiers' guard-room, stating what a real gentleman young Mr. Harold Blanchard 'were."

"Harold," said the colonel, with a look of great anxiety, "I shall never get well."

"You will indeed, colonel."

"No, no. I do not think that the wound would have killed me; but you see, lying here all alone—for I am practically all alone—my mind goes back upon itself. Life has stood still with me since the duel, and I am a creature of the past. I have always before me the face of Captain Beauchamp, with its dying look."

"Come, come, colonel, you let your imagination play you tricks. What if Captain Beauchamp did fall by your sword? What then? You did not mean to kill him."

"But I did kill him."

There was such a look of anguish upon the face of Colonel Blanchard that the Owlet was constrained to turn away his eyes.

"If I could but restore him to life again," he said, "I think I would give some few years of my own existence for his, if it would bring you back peace of mind. It was but a misadventure, after all."

"Yes; if I had had the moral courage to outface it, and to say so at the time, as I ought to have done, then I might have got over it."

"Be at peace, you shall still get over it."

"No, no. The body."

"Now listen to me. I have had the body carefully taken away and buried; so that there is nothing to dread on that score."

"That is something; but yet, if the affair should come to the ears of the king I am a ruined man."

The Owlet smiled.

"And if the king made you a major-general, and said that, upon a careful consideration of all the circumstances, he thought that, whatever there might be to disapprove of in your conduct, you had suffered more than enough for it?"

"Impossible."

"Not so. Have patience yet awhile."

"That drink, Harold. In the blue jug."

"Do you drink this freely?"

"I should expire from thirst if I did not."

"Well, well. Keep up your spirits now, colonel, and I will keep my word. By to-morrow at noon you will be very much better than you are now; because something will happen that will relieve your mind of some portion of the burthen that weighs upon it."

"I will hope."

"Do so—do so. And now good day. I shall see you again soon probably."

"Yes, Harold. Do you know I am glad to see you now?"

"You are?"

"Yes. Almost as glad as if you were really akin to me. I no longer have the same sort of shuddering dread of you that I had."

"I am very glad to hear that. Believe me that I am most desirous of being your friend; and now good-bye for the present."

"Good-bye, Harold."

The Owlet was touched to the heart by this slight interview with Colonel Blanchard, and there was a look of great sadness on his face as he walked up St. James's Street, in search of Ensign Hargrave.

The ensign was at a tavern—clubs were not then in existence.

"My dear fellow," said the Owlet, "I have just seen Colonel Blanchard, and he says that my being off duty so long is apt to be prejudicial to me; so if you would let me relieve Ducie to-night I should be much obliged to you."

"With all my heart, Harold."

"Thank you! Thank you! All goes well," said the Owlet to himself. "No one opposes me. The path seems to be smoothened before me. All is well—all is well."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE TWO KINGS.

The sun has set on that eventful Saturday—it has set in a blaze of crimson and gold, and the last faint beams from its dying glories has flitted away from the old red brick turrets of St. James's Palace.

The Owlet, with a smile on his lips, walks in his usual quiet way through the common guard-room, and gains the officers' guard-chamber.

Ensign Viscount Ducie is there.

The viscount is very weary, very tired of his own company, which is singularly uninteresting, and he is yawning, and smoking, and now and then using language that is decidedly beneath his patrician condition. But he is pleased to see the door open.

"Hargrave," he said, "is that you? By Jove, no! It is you, Blanchard, is it?"

"Yes, Ducie."

"Well, it's a shame!"

"What's a shame?"

"What? Why, Hargrave not coming here to relieve me."

"Well, I have arranged all that with him. He wants a rest, and I want duty; so here I am to relieve you."

"You are?"

"On honour!"

"Good day! good day!"

Ensign Viscount Ducie was off and away without another word.

The palace clock struck seven.

The Owlet sat down and rested his head upon his hands. A whole hour passed away.

The palace clock struck eight.

Another hour.

The Owlet looked up and counted the strokes of the clock. It was nine.

The room was profoundly dark.

The Owlet went to a silken bell-pull, which he could only find by moving his hand along the wall for it, and summoned the sergeant of the guard.

"Lights, sergeant."

"Yes, your honour. We did not know your honour had come in."

"It matters not. Lights now."

"Yes, your honour."

The sergeant brought a pair of silver candlesticks, with wax lights.

"This parcel is for your honour," he said, as he produced a paper finely tied up and sealed.

"Yes. Leave it on the table."

"Yes, your honour."

"Who brought it?"

"A young woman, your honour."

"It is well. You can go; and you can take the night duty till I send for you."

"Yes, your honour."

The sergeant left the room, and the Owlet listened until his footsteps were no longer heard.

"A young woman," he said. "They call Annie a young woman now; but they shall call her Your Royal Highness soon—if I live—if I live."

The Owlet now passed two more hours in pacing the room to and fro.

It was eleven o'clock. The wind had risen, and was blowing in fierce gusts about the courts and turrets of the old palace.

"It is time," said the Owlet.

He opened the door that led to the colonel's apartments; and as he did so he saw the old woman apparently waiting for him.

"You may go now," he said.

"Thank you, sir! Thank you, sir! I'm sure I'm tired—I am, sir; and thanks to you for a night's rest."

"Go—go. Take the staircase to the left, and you will not have to go through the guard-room."

"Yes, sir, if you please."

The old woman was gone.

The Owlet was alone in that suite of rooms in the palace. He went to the door of the officers' guard-room, and locked it.

"I must be secure from interruption in that direction," he said.

The Owlet then untied and unsealed the parcel that had been brought to him. It contained a complete court suit, with a diamond royal star upon the breast of the coat. He rapidly exchanged his regimentals for this suit, and then throwing over him his military cloak, he went out of the officers' guard-room towards the colonel's bedchamber.

He could hear the wind roaring and battling about the old chimney-tops and turrets — sometimes wailing like some one in mortal agony, and then dying off in sighs, only to come back again with sudden flapping bursts, like the dashing of mighty wings.

The colonel slept.

The Owlet stood by the side of the couch, and looked intently at him.

"No—no," he said. "He must have the narcotic. He might awaken at any inopportune moment; and it can do him no harm. I am assured of that."

The Owlet then took from his pocket a small bottle, and decanted its contents into the night drink. He then touched the colonel lightly on the shoulder.

"Colonel—colonel!"

"Yes—O God!—yes."

"Hush! There is nothing amiss."

"What is it?"

"Nothing—nothing! You were asleep, and I awakened you, perhaps, rather suddenly. That is all. I am on duty to-night, and have only come in to see how you are. Will you have some drink?"

"Oh! yes—yes."

The colonel drank deeply of the drugged potion.

"So you are on duty?" he said, faintly.

"Yes."

"What is the time?"

"Eleven o'clock."

"Ah! what is that I hear?"

"The wind raging about the palace. It is a boisterous night."

"Very—very. Good night, Harold. I don't understand, you see, what your objects are; but I don't think—I don't—that you are a bad man—no—no, not a bad man—not bad—"

The colonel was in a deep sleep.

"Rest in peace," said the Owlet. And he took off his cloak and placed it on a chair.

It was a very startling and strange circumstance to Gerald Alton (who had taken up his station since eleven o'clock close to the gate of the palace) that at that hour there arrived a coach at the palace, from which alighted no less than six persons, two of whom were in full uniform as general officers. The others were in court suits, and Gerald heard one say to another,—

"Well, marquis, this will be a good deed on your part, in regard to the king, which should be for ever remembered."

Then the person addressed as marquis said,—

"I obey orders from Versailles."

The whole party then went into the palace.

In the course of the next ten minutes the sentries were doubled at the gate, and Gerald heard one of the men say to the other,—

"What have we all got ball-cartridge to-night for? Eh?"

A cold feeling of dread, of he knew not what, came over the heart of Gerald Alton.

But we return to the Owlet.

There was a night-lamp burning in the colonel's room, and this the Owlet now took in his left hand, and with his right he opened the closed door, within which he had made such important discoveries upon a former occasion. All was precisely as he had seen before, and he set down the light on a table near, and gently drew out the shelf behind which he had found the piece of cloth with the indentation in it.

The Owlet ran his finger now along this piece of cloth. Again and again it sunk at one part. A rapid slit with a penknife soon disclosed that the hollow place was a keyhole.

"As I thought—as I thought," said the Owlet.

He had removed from a pocket in his regimentals a bunch of picklocks, and now he set to work silently and skilfully to open the lock that corresponded with the keyhole behind the strip of cloth.

With a slight grating noise the lock turned. There was a creak, as if paint or damp had stuck the hinges close, and then, in obedience to the pressure of the Owlet's hand, the whole panel gently opened.

A dark void appeared beyond.

A slight exclamation came from the Owlet's lips. He had expected to find a room on the other side of the secret door; but there was no such thing. He stretched out his hands into the darkness; he touched a wall—a wall of panel within two feet of him. He stooped to feel if there was a floor; for he could not tell but he might be on the brink of some abyss.

Yes, there was a floor. He felt the dust of ages on it like soft snow or wool. When he looked at his hands by the light they were perfectly black.

Then he held the night-light close to the panelled door and looked out. The space beyond was a narrow passage, along which one person only could pass.

"This is between two rooms," said the Owlet, so faintly that not even a weasel could have been disturbed by the sound.

Then, with the night-lamp in his hand, he slowly walked along the passage to the right.

But it seemed interminable.

The Owlet paused. He reflected for a few moments, and then crept back to the colonel's room. The wounded man slept soundly.

The Owlet then took a folded paper from his breast-pocket, and laid it on the table and opened it. It was a plan of St. James's Palace, with all the suites of rooms set forth.

"Yes," he said, "I am right. The king's chamber must be next to these rooms, and its two windows, or three windows, must look into the Colour Court.

He left the plan lying on the table, and once more took the night-light and went into the narrow passage. He moved the light up and down the wall—that is, the opposite wall or panelling to that which was at the back of the closet,—and then suddenly he said,—

"Found!"

There was a keyhole lying horizontally in the wall; and he set down the light on the dust-piled floor, and carefully used his picklocks.

The instrument did its duty; a lock moved, a door slightly creaked, opening toward him. Then a faint ray of light came from some slight opening. The Owlet paused a moment and pressed his hand upon his heart.

"Be still—be still!" he said.

Then he blew out the night-light. The ray of light from a long crevice was stronger. The Owlet stepped over two feet of flooring and pushed a door. It opened noiselessly, and he bent eagerly forward.

He was in the chamber of the king—a room hung with green silk and gold tassels; a bed, with a canopy surmounted by a royal crown; tall candelabra, one wax light in one of which was alight; some wine and fruit upon a marble table; a slight odour of perfumes; a death-like stillness.

The Owlet stood like a statue, and his eyes took in all the sights. He could hear nothing in the room, but he could hear the beating of his own heart.

He stepped forward another pace.

His feet now were on a soft thick carpet that effectually deadened all sound.

He made another step forward.

"I will not kill him," he said, faintly. "I cannot kill him. Unless he should resist—unless he should be dangerous; but he will be my prisoner. My prisoner—this false king—this usurper! This—"

The Owlet paused. He thought he heard a faint, slight noise, like the

clatter of arms in the Colour Court below.

"What is it? What is it? Oh, it is a friend. They are there. It is about their time. The lords of my council. They were to get there by the private door of my Lord Chamberlain's office. Yes—yes, they are there."

The clock of the palace struck twelve.

"It is time," said the Owlet.

He approached the bedside. The occupant was really completely covered over with ample clothing.

The Owlet laid his hand heavily upon the sleeper's shoulder, if sleeper he were.

"One word!—one cry!—a movement even from your recumbent position in this bed, and you are a corpse!"

A slight exclamation came from the person in the bed.

The Owlet then sprang to the middle window of the three that looked into the Colour Court; he tore down the blind; he flung the window open; and in a loud voice he cried out,—

"Long live the king!"

A rush of night-wind came into the room, and blew out the light in the candelabrum, but a torch flared up in the Colour Court as a loud voice said,—

"Long live King Harold the Second!"

"Descend, your majesty," said another voice. "The Guard is with us."

"Ah, that is you, marquis?"

"It is."

"Close the palace gate! The distance is nothing. I will leap down to you. George is petrified with fear. He will not stir."

"Long live the king!" cried several other voices.

A drum beat furiously.

"Where is the abbé?" cried the Owlet, as he with a leap cleared the window-sill, and alighted safely in the Colour Court.

"Fly!—fly!" shouted a voice.

"Ah!"

"Treason!" said one.

There was a rush of feet. The Owlet stood alone for a moment.

"What is this?" he said. What is all this? Friends! my lords!—where are you all?"

A window was dashed up on the other side of the Colour Court; that is to say, opposite to the window at which the Owlet had sprung out. There was a blaze of light at that window, and to his surprise the Owlet saw George the Third in person standing just within it.

"I am betrayed!" he said.

One glance around him showed him the state of affairs. To his right was the cloister, as it was called—a low range of arches; the glitter of military uniforms was there. The other three sides of the court were enclosed by walls, and windows, and closed doors.

"Betrayed! Betrayed!" he cried out twice.

"Fire!" yelled George the Third.

There was a volley of musketry from the troops in the cloister.

The Owlet lay pierced by twenty bullets.

Then the French ambassador stepped up to the body and bowed to the king at the window as he said,—

"I congratulate your majesty upon being rid of so dangerous a traitor."

"What is it? O tell me! tell me!" said Gerald Alton to an officer who came out of the palace hurriedly.

"Only a man shot who wanted to assassinate the king."

Gerald felt that it was his friend, and he ran home to Alice with pale and ghastly looks.

The next day the story was all through London of how a man had penetrated to the king's chamber, in which, as his attempt was known, one of the soldiers of the Guard had volunteered to sleep, and that the traitor had been shot in the Colour Court. Gerald Alton went to see the body, and recognized his friend.

There was a precipitate flight from England that same night of thirteen noblemen, all Roman Catholics; but a man in the costume of an abbé was found lying dead beneath the cloisters

of the palace. He had been killed by a bayonet-thrust through the chest.

It was some days after these tragical events that Gerald opened the sealed packet left him by the Owlet. It contained some valuable jewels, and a conveyance to him of the house in St. James's Square, and a recommendation that he would take care of the horse Leo and the dog Drift. It ended with these words,—

"If you open this, I am dead, because, if I live, I shall ask it of you. Accept what I give you—it comes from the King of England. Be kind to Annie, our sister. HAROLD REX."

Alice wept bitterly, and Annie joined her tears to those of Alice, and then it was Gerald who said,—

"This is the work of Providence. He is happier now than if he sat upon the throne. He is at peace!"

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THE WHITE QUEEN

AND

THE MOHAWK CHIEF.

A TALE OF INDIAN WARFARE.

BY J. B. JONES.

GLASGOW:
CAMERON & FERGUSON, WEST NILE STREET.
LONDON: F. PITMAN, 20 PATERNOSTER ROW.

THE WAR PATH.

CHAPTER I

A DENSE fog hung over the placid surface of the Delaware River, and enveloped in its folds many of the ancient buildings of Burlington, then the capital of New Jersey.

Yet, notwithstanding the gloom which oppressed the atmosphere, a most extraordinary sound of hilarity burst from the hall of one of the dwellings on the principal street running at right angles with the river. The house from which the sound proceeded was the habitation of a Quaker. The hall door was open, and within, erect as a young man of thirty-five, stood Thomas Schooley, in his sixtieth year, surrounded by several of his friends, of about the same age and stature, all being tall and athletic, and habited alike, as they were all Quakers.

Friend Schooley was receiving the parting adieus of his brethren in Burlington, before departing on what was then termed the long and perilous journey to the north-western counties of the colony. And the mirthful sound, so unusual on such occasions, and so extraordinary at any time among that class of people, had been produced by the following remark:—"Thee will save thy property, Thomas, and also thy neck, by fleeing to the mountains." The old man laughed quite heartily for a brief interval; while a youthful auditor in the parlour seemed to yield to uncontrollable merriment. She had beheld the sudden relaxation of the countenances of the aged men; and their long sharp noses, singularly alike, reaching beyond their sunken lips almost down to their peaked chins, had caused her cachinnation.

Beside the young lady sat the wife of Thomas, erect and tall, and plainly habited in a costly hooded salmon-coloured cloak and scooped bonnet. Her bloodless lips experienced no contraction; but her pallid brow, with a quiver slightly perceptible, was turned toward her youthful companion.

"Julia, thee dost not seem to be cast down at the moment of departing."

"Indeed I could not help laughing, Mrs Schooley, when I saw the faces of the old men."

"I fear they will suffer many agonies in the wrathful storm soon to burst upon this devoted country," said she, with a deep sigh; "and I trust the Lord will so sustain them that they may not find their laughter turned to groans under affliction. But thee must call me Mary, Julia, and not Mrs Schooley, as is the wont of those with whom Thomas, thy guardian, permitted thee to dwell."

"Pardon me, Mary; I will strive to obey thee in future. And in truth it should be a very melancholy moment; for from among the savages and wild beasts of the wilderness, whither we are going, there can be no certainty we shall ever return. Thy son Richard, whom I see endeavouring to wash away his tears at the pump, must be sorely distressed at the idea of the hardships and dangers to be encountered."

"No, Julia. He merely grieves at the wickedness of mankind and the abominations of rebellions. He is a dutiful child, and strong, too. He is quite as tall as his father, and can perform as much labour as the stoutest slave we possess. He is industrious and careful, and will not see diminished the estate he is to inherit. But here is Thomas," she continued rising.

"Sit still, Mary," said Thomas. "Let us tarry until I can utter the words which I am prompted to speak to Julia, my ward. Julia, dost thou think thy mind quite decided upon making this journey?"

"Oh, quite, Mr Schooley—Thomas, I should have said. I am delighted at the idea of dwelling in the wilderness, and am very impatient to be gone."

"Thee shall be gratified. But I would warn thee of the privations of a forest life, and then, for the last time, leave it optional with thee to go or remain. I am thy guardian, and might exert my authority; but bad motives would be attributed if any mischance should follow. Thou art the sole descendant of one of the proprietors under William Berkeley, who derived by James——"

"James, Duke of York, brother of the King—Sir William Berkeley, Earl of Stratton; and my ancestor was a knight—Sir Thomas Lane. But pardon me—I did not intend to interrupt thee."

"Thee knows I regard titles as merely frivolous appendages, although I practise submission to those in authority. Well! thou art the heiress of all the lands held by thy father at his death, as I am the heir of my father, whose first ancestor was landed in this town from the 'Willing Mind,' in 1677, some twenty years before thy titled ancestor was appointed governor."

"Yes, he was a governor; I forgot that."

"He was a better officer and man than his successor, Edward, called Lord Cornbury, the presumptuous and dissipated cousin of Ann, denominated the Queen. But, as I was saying to thee, thou art the heiress of much land of which we know little; but which may be valuable at a future period, if not confiscated."

"Confiscated?"

"Listen, and thee will learn my meaning. As I was saying to thee, I have likewise many tracts, of more or less fertility, besides the mountain, which I have been told will perpetuate my name—truly a useless distinction,—and all of which might be lost if we were to become identified with the people about to engage in this rebellion."

"If thee resolves to go with us, well; but, if thee decides at the last moment to remain, William Franklin is ready to receive thee."

"I will go with thee. And, if I did not, I would not stay at the governor's house."

"Thee is positive, Julia," said Mary.

"I mean, with my guardian's permission, I would prefer to live at the house of ——"

"William Livingston, thee would say," added Thomas.

"True, and be with my old schoolmate, Kate."

"William Livingston will join the rebels. And would'st thou prefer to dwell with him for that reason?"

"No, Thomas—that is—I know not what to say. But do not frown upon me. Indeed, it was not on that account I preferred to dwell in his mansion. But if the rebels should succeed, and if I were to live with Governor Franklin, might we not lose our lands?"

"Thee must not suppose the rebels can succeed. And I hope thee has not formed an *attachment* for any one but thy friend Kate at Elizabethtown?"

"Indeed, *indeed*, I have not!"

"Then do not blush, Julia," said Mary, smiling. "Nor at Princeton," continued Thomas, while poor Julia continued to blush, "where I learnt thy Elizabethtown friends used to visit, and that thou hadst danced with the young man who won the first honour in college."

"If I do blush, Thomas, it is not the blush of shame. You are my guardian, to whom I promised my dying father to render all reasonable obedience. I danced with Charles Cameron. Kate Livingston and myself danced with him an equal number of times. But I deny having formed any *attachment* such as you allude to." As Julia uttered these words, pallor chased away her blushes.

"I believe thee, Julia. Thou didst never yet fear to tell the truth, and I honour thy candour. This Charles, I am told, is a young man of talent. He was taken, Mary, when an infant, by the Indians, and lived among them some fifteen years. When restored to his father, who had long mourned his loss in solitude, living a hermit's life on the Delaware, near the Gap——"

"Does he live there still?" asked Julia, quickly.

"He does, and on thy land, or on a tract adjoining thine."

"Poor child!" said Mary.

"Thee must not decide too hastily," continued Thomas. "It does not appear that he is poor, or an object of pity. At all events, his father, it seems, had money to bestow upon him an expensive education; and thee has heard the young man achieved the first honour. Nevertheless, his father was not present."

"He was not? How strange!" said Julia, abstractedly.

"I have seen this youth at the governor's, and I assure thee, Mary, he made a good appearance; seemed affable and polished, and was treated with courtesy by William. But let us not linger. The sun breaks forth through the mist, and we shall have a fine day. The coach waits at the door. Come, Richard. We leave an open house in the keeping of thy old nurse. Thou wilt go, Julia?"

"Oh, yes, freely, eagerly," said she, rising and taking his arm.

"Thee will meet him, perhaps, at his father's house," said Richard, who had been listening, half archly and half reproachfully.

"When didst thou see him at the governor's, Thomas?" asked Julia, not heeding Richard.

"This very morning. He was William's guest last night."

"You see, Mary, and you too, Richard, that he did not visit me," said Julia.

"He arrived late in the night," resumed Thomas, while Julia seemed

to lean somewhat heavily on his arm. "He had been sent for by William, who has perhaps employed him in the service of George, since he is familiar with the dialects of the Indians."

"I am sure he would not assume any such—that is—I mean—I am quite certain he would not use his influence to incite the Indians to hostility—*to* make war upon the innocent inhabitants——"

"No, child, thee need not fear it. But it would be no trifling service to ascertain, through the instrumentality of this young man, the sentiments of the various chiefs in regard to the unhappy quarrel with the mother country, and to persuade them to remain neutral during the contest. I know not whether the lad agreed to the proposals of the governor; but I saw him set out in company with another college-bred Indian youth, named Bartholomew Calvin—in the Delaware language, *Shawuskukhkung*, meaning *Wilted Grass*. They were mounted on fine horses, and quickly disappeared on the road we will soon be traversing."

By the time the last speech was ended, the party of four were seated in the carriage; and Paddy Pence, the Irish coachman, flourished his long whip over the horses' ears as they bounded forward on the Trenton Road.

Julia Lane was just in her blissful seventeenth year. Though slight and fragile, her stature was sufficiently tall, and her form of beautiful proportions. She had an exquisite complexion, wavering between the fair and the dark, sometimes the one and sometimes the other; and features not susceptible of classification, but ever varying with her emotions and fully expressing them.

She now sat in silence beside her female companion, leaning her delicate chin upon her small hand, listlessly oblivious of the appraisements of the farms and tenements they passed uttered by her guardian and his son Richard. Her thoughts were divided between the past and the unknown future.

Julia's guardian had been the agent and then the partner of her father; and many vast tracts of land were held in common between them, and remained undivided at the demise of Mr Lane. The estate of Mr Lane was left to the sole use of the heiress upon attaining a certain age. She was to be permitted to attend the church of her fathers, having been baptized by the Rev. Dr Jonathan Odell, rector of St Mary's, Burlington; but she was not to marry during her minority, without the permission of her guardian. She was, however, permitted to associate with the acquaintances she had formed before her father's death, and, among the rest, Kate Livingston—the daughter of an able lawyer living at Elizabethtown, near Staten Island Sound, with whom Mr Lane had much legal business, and who was destined subsequently to act an important part in the affairs of his country.

It was at the mansion of Mr Livingston, where Julia sojourned the greater portion of her time, that she became acquainted with Charles Cameron and Bartholomew S. Calvin,—the latter being the nephew and heir of the king of that portion of the Delaware nation which remained upon the seaboard; a lad of mournful spirit and great meekness, upon whom Dr Witherspoon, of the College at Princeton, had resolved to bestow a classical education. These youths had attracted the notice of Mr Livingston; and, foreseeing the benefits which might be derived from their knowledge of Indian character during the approaching struggle

with the mother country, he had prevailed on them to spend the vacations at his house, and from them both himself and his daughter Kate, as well as Julia, learned many of the remarkable characteristics of the tribes of the forest.

CHAPTER II.

The fog of the morning having been dispelled by the glorious sun in a cloudless sky, and the road leading mostly through a level country until it passed the northern limits of the present Mercer county, our travellers accomplished what was deemed a good day's journey long before the approach of darkness. Paddy Pence had not spared his horses, nor had Thomas Schooley restrained his hand, until they came in view of the beautiful valley in Hunterdon county, in which the famous log tavern of John Ringo was situated, and where it had been determined to rest the first night.

Paddy was now ordered to permit the horses to fall into a gentler pace, for they exhibited symptoms of weariness, and one of them had loosened a shoe.

The horses crept along slowly, and our travellers, for the double purpose of relieving them, and stretching their own limbs, left the carriage.

Julia and Richard, proceeding briskly, were soon several hundred paces in advance, and appeared to be much interested with the objects which met their view.

"I am glad to see thee joyful, Julia," said the young man, when he perceived a smile upon the fair face of his companion, as she stooped ever and anon to observe a severed wild flower, to which she evidently attached a signification incomprehensible to Richard.

"There is a freshness in the air, Richard, a perfume in the wild flowers, a grandeur and sublimity in the woods and hills, never known in cities or densely peopled districts, and irresistibly productive of an exhilaration of spirits."

"I wish I could feel it!" said he, sighing. "Even the Indian marks on the tree we have just passed seemed to be interesting to thee, while to me they were without meaning. I wish some one would teach me to enjoy the things which afford thee pleasure, and also the way to please thee."

"Oh, don't sigh, Richard! The things which please my fancy would be considered frivolous by thy father, and no doubt he has long since taught thee to regard them as he does."

"No, no, Julia; if anything I could do might appear pleasing in thy sight, I would not deem it frivolous."

"I thank thee, Richard. You were ever kind to me. I am sensible of your goodness, and of your father's indulgence to a wayward orphan. I am striving to conform to his rules. I have learned his manner of speech——"

"And it sounds like music from thy lips."

"Why, Richard, thou hast been learning to compliment a poor maiden after the fashion of the world!"

"Nay, Julia, it was the untutored impulse of my heart!"

"Then I am the more thankful for the compliment, as it cannot be a

vain and empty one. Thou didst ask me what would give me pleasure. Flowers and birds. Gather the first on the hills, and Paddy Pence will cultivate them for me; and entice the birds into the garden, rather than frighten them away, as thy father did in Burlington. But how can I repay thee? What meanest thou by such incessant sighing."

"How repay me? One smile is enough—but I—I declare to thee I do not know what I do! I will strive to correct the fault of sighing."

"Do, Richard. I would like to see thee cheerful. Stay! don't trample upon them!" she added, quickly, as her companion's foot was suspended over a collection of blossoms of various hues.

"They were plucked, Julia, by some one unknown to us. Thee seems to study them as if thou wert superstitious."

"I am a little superstitious, Richard," said she, smiling, as she collected the blossoms and enjoyed their perfume. The next moment they were joined by Mr Schooley, and overtaken by the carriage. They were soon in front of Ringo's log tavern, where they were welcomed heartily.

The shades of evening, and the descending dew, even in May, made the blazing logs in the broad fireplace productive both of a cheerful aspect and a congenial temperature.

Our travellers, therefore, after a hearty repast, collected in front of the broad, glowing hearth.

Later in the evening, when the moon shone brightly, and the sinking embers threw up a crimson glow which illuminated the recesses of the loft above, a howling in the woods attracted notice.

"What is that?" asked Julia.

"That," said John Ringo, "is either a wolf or an Indian."

"Murther! Did you say Indian, Mr Ringo?" exclaimed Paddy, who was a thorough coward, rising from the table, and, unbidden, occupying a stool near the corner of the capacious fireplace.

"Or a wolf, Paddy," replied Mr Ringo. But take a dram, and I will tell you what took place here one night when I was a boy."

"John," said Mr Schooley, "thee must not tempt Patrick to drink. We still have a long road before us. But thou mayest tell him some of the anecdotes of early times. And I see Julia is impatient to hear thee. But thy listeners must not forget that thy adventures happened many years ago."

Mr Ringo, nothing loath, at once acted on the hint. By-and-bye Mr Schooley, addressing the Irishman, said, "Wilt thou not be made fearful, Patrick, listening to such stories?"

"Niver a bit, yer honour. I'll show you I'm not afraid! I'll go to the stable meself, and see if the horses are comfortable; and airly in the morning I'll have the shoe faxed at the shop down at the mill."

Paddy walked bravely out into the yard, and on to the gate, upon which his hand was resting, when he espied a solitary horseman coming slowly down the road. He stood undecided whether to advance or retire, until the stranger was sufficiently near to perceive that he wore a blanket thrown gracefully over his shoulders, that his head was surmounted with a crest of feathers, and that he held a gun in his hand. Then Paddy was undecided no longer. Starting back, he ran into the house, his face as pale as death, and his limbs trembling at every joint.

"Why, what hast thou seen?" demanded Mrs Schooley.

"Tell me, Paddy, what it is!" cried Julia, with a smile.

But Paddy was almost speechless, and could barely articulate the word "Indian!"

Ringo went out immediately, followed by Mr Schooley and Julia. The stranger had dismounted, tied his horse to a tree, and was standing near the front entrance of the house.

"Who are you?" demanded Ringo.

"Thayendanegea," replied the Indian, with a lofty brow and erect stature.

"That means Brandt, in English," said Ringo, advancing. "How do you do, Brandt? I'm glad to see you. How you have grown since I saw you last! Why, you are a large man, now!"

"Ay, and a sachem," said the young chief, smiling, (for he could speak our language very well.) "But, tell me, how high was the moon when the White Eagle departed toward the Kittaning?"

"White Eagle?"

"Ay:—my white brother."

"You mean the young Cameron?"

"Ay."

"It was before the middle of the afternoon."

"And who was with him? By the trail I see there were two, and one was of the Lenni Lenappé family, of which I too am descended. His totem is on the tree at the crossing, a tortoise, like mine. His name?"

"We call him Bart Calvin," said Ringo.

"His name is Shawuskukhkung, meaning, in your language, *Wilted Grass*," said Brandt, without other emotion than a slight sneer of contempt. "It is the right name," he continued. "The wild flower perishes in the hothouses of the pale-face, and, when cooped, the eagle becomes a dunghill-fowl. The once mighty Algonquin droops like wilted grass! Its shrivelled branches should be bathed in blood."

"Blood!" said Julia, who could not avoid admiring the form and poetry of the speaker, but was startled at the mention of the sanguinary remedy for the resuscitation of a decaying race.

"And thou art the fair Antelope which charmed the eye of the young eagle? Thayendanegea, too, can write with the quill, as well as his brother, and we have corresponded."

"I have often heard him speak of thee," said Julia, from habit using the terms employed in the family of her guardian; "and he loves thee as a brother."

"I hope so," was Brandt's laconic reply.

"Come in," said Ringo. "Forgive me, Brandt, for my forgetfulness."

"Thee did expect to meet the White Eagle and Wilted Grass at this place?" interrogated Mr Schooley.

"White-Eagle—not Wilted Grass. His speech, left at the crossing, says the Antelope and her pale friends must fill the wigwam here, and he will light a camp-fire some miles distant on the path, which will guide me to his couch."

"And thou didst call him brother?"

"I did. He was a pappoose when brought to our wigwam, and lived with us until he began to pluck hairs from his chin. We swam, and fished, and hunted together among the cool lakes. I had lost my brother, and he supplied his place. But the White Head came and

removed him to the college of the pale-faces. I will see him once more. If he loves the pale-faces better than his brother, he will desert the paths of the forest. Ha!" he exclaimed, rising, his eyes glowing with a sudden fierceness as he heard the peculiar snort of his horse. He strode to the window, and in amazement beheld Paddy belabouring his steed with a stout branch of an apple-tree.

Brandt rushed forth into the road, and, seizing the halter and the bough at the same time, after bestowing the latter upon the shoulders of the astonished Paddy, mounted his steed and galloped away.

Poor Paddy had been sent to "bate" the horse and misunderstood his instructions.

CHAPTER III.

WHILE our travellers are slumbering at "The Old Ringo Tavern," we will accompany Thayendanegea to the camp of the White Eagle and Wilted Grass.

It was near the hour of midnight when Brandt perceived the glimmer of a light on an eminence to his left. It was upon a knoll surrounded by ancient oaks, through the interstices of which the sinking embers could be seen at intervals. It had been one of the favourite camping grounds from time immemorial. Brandt had not revisited it since the days of his early youth, and then Charles was with him.

The young chief dismounted and drew near the sinking fire. Brandt found the two young men steeped in slumber; but the light was not sufficient to distinguish their faces. He stood with folded arms, gazing intently. Had he been an enemy, how easily he might have despatched them both! But such was not his mission. He was in quest of friends and coadjutors. He made a single step forward, as if to rouse them, but paused abruptly. He turned away and noiselessly replenished the fire. He then approached the open end of the camp, and stood again with folded arms and a thoughtful brow.

Charles turned uneasily on his couch, and muttered in his dream the following:—"I am no Indian; I have no savage blood in my veins."

Brandt started forward with a horrible scowl, snatched the tomahawk from his belt, and flourished it menacingly over Charles's head. But the next moment the shining weapon was replaced, and the Mohawk resumed his meditative attitude.

The dry wood was now crackling and blazing brightly, and the whole scene became distinctly apparent. At length a smile illumined the handsome features of Brandt, and, taking a reed from his bosom, he played one of the tunes familiar to the ears of Charles when gliding over the smooth surface of the Ontario, or floating in the canoe on the waters of the gentle Wyalusing. At the conclusion of the strain Charles rushed forth, and, with the words, "Brother! My brother!" the young men were locked in each other's arms. It had been five years since they parted. Before that event, and for many years previously, they had been inseparable.

After a prolonged silence, they sat down and smoked the pipe which Brandt had filled, gazing with delight and affection at each other.

Wilted Grass came forth and sat down beside them.

"Shawuskukhkung," said Brandt, extending his hand, "we, too, are brothers. We flow from the same parent stream,—the Algonquin,—and come from the same Lenni Lenappé family. Why should we widen the tract which separates us?"

"Thayendanegea speaks the truth," replied the Delaware chief. But streams never more run together when parted by mountains. I will die where my fathers died."

"But not live as they did. Your hunting-grounds are turned into pig-pens."

"There is a land beyond the grave—forests where the axe never sounds. Such are the peaceful hunting grounds of my fathers, and thither I will join them."

"True. But the same Great Spirit bestowed upon us this beautiful land. Will it please him if we meanly surrender it to the trafficking stranger, from whom the game flies in horror and disgust? Can a coward enter the hunting grounds of the spirit-land?"

"Thayendanegea, I am no coward," said the Delaware.

"Tschichohocki (Burlington) was once the village of a thousand braves. But the Mantas came from the slimy creeks, and licked them into another shape, and blew their own breath down their throats, and swam away with their squaws to Matinicunk, where their children became frogs."

"Frogs!"

"They still croak upon the banks of the Delaware River; but when danger approaches they close their eyes and dive down to the bottom."

"And do you mean to call me a frog and a coward?" demanded the young Delaware, rising indignantly, with his hand on his tomahawk.

"I do not raise my hand against the Wilted Grass," said Brandt, with imperturbable composure. "When the Great Council was held at the Forks of the Delaware, your people were all women. Teedyuscung, your head chief, spake without rising, like a squaw. Tagashatá removed the petticoat which had once been worn at a treaty. Then he was a great chief again."

"He was always a great chief," said the Delaware, resuming his seat, with a sigh. "At that council he removed the French hatchets from the heads of the English. You and I and White Eagle were present. We were too young to listen; but we were told afterward by our fathers what had been done. The nations listened to Teedyuscung, and made solemn pledges of peace. The Delawares forget not their pledges."

"The Mohawks do not violate their treaties," said Brandt. "The Five Nations then signed a treaty of friendship with their Great Father over the broad water. They will keep their promise."

"You forget what the Senecas have since done, instigated by their chief Tagashata. Five years after the meeting of the Great Council they murdered Teedyuscung, and falsely said the English perpetrated the foul deed."

"Not the English, but the Yankees, who were seizing the Susquehanna valleys. And they say so still."

"But they say falsely. The Minisinks loved Teedyuscung, and it was known they would be revenged."

"Let us not discuss those things, my brother," said Charles.

"No!" cried Brandt, springing to his feet. The past is gone for

ever. We who were boys are men, and our fathers have gone to the hunting grounds of the spirit-land unarmed and in fetters. Let us follow them with our rifles, that they may eat. It was you, my brother, I wished to go with us. The Wilted Grass will bend over the graves of his kindred. But the nations of the West will come in multitudes, like the leaves and the stars. The blood of our enemies will run into the sea, like the rushing streams after a mighty storm. I hurl away the pipe of peace. War is declared! And there is no time for idle delay. Will the White Eagle return with his brother to the lakes?"

"No; not if my brother intends to come back and tomahawk my father. But I will go with him if he will remain at peace."

"Peace! My brother does not seem to know that the Six Nations have already sounded the warwhoop. The great tribes of the West are echoing the scalp-halloo from the war-paths of the mountains, and the royal governors of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York, have sent us arms and money."

"I feared so," said Charles, despondingly.

"Feared, brother?"

"Not for myself."

"Who then?"

"*You*, and thy devoted race. My brother, our Great Father over the broad water is a bad man. His armies will be beaten. The Americans will triumph, and the poor Indian be the last victim."

Just then a hailing halloo was heard in the valley below, where the path diverged from the main road, and the party in the camp became singularly excited at so unexpected a salutation. It proceeded evidently from a party of Indians, or from men familiarly conversant with their mode of shouting. Brandt answered it; and a few minutes after three men—two Indians and a tall white man—came trotting up to the encampment. The white man was the famous Simon Girty, who had been dwelling among the Western Indians since the French war, and had been taken prisoner about the time of Braddock's defeat. The others were the chiefs of the Shawnees and the Ottoways,—Cornstalk and Pontiac.

"And you will join your brother, I suppose?" said Girty, in the English language to young Cameron.

"I shall remain at home in peace, if possible," said Charles.

"It will not be possible. You must be with us or against us. And you will have to decide without delay. There will be stirring times—"

"*I* will not stir, if I can help it."

"Once more, my brother," said Brandt, approaching Charles, "I ask you to go with us."

"No!" said Charles.

"Then, farewell! But, if we should meet again in bloody strife, still, let us remember we were brothers."

"I would have it so, Thayendanegea. But I have no desire to spill any man's blood, and I hope this war may be smothered in its birth. I go to see my gray-haired father; after that, I know not what I shall do. I did hope to fish and hunt with my brother on the head-waters of the Susquehanna. But such may not be if the scalp-halloo reverberates through the valleys. Give this to the Brown Thrush, my sister. Tell her the White Eagle will dream of her, although he may not see her."

Brandt opened the casket which had been placed in his hand, and glanced at the jewels that were to adorn his sister's brow and wrists; and then, gazing silently and long at his white brother, turned slowly away and joined the departing guests, who had completed the scanty meal which had been placed before them.

And Charles and his Delaware companion followed soon after. They had not proceeded more than a mile, however, when they beheld Brandt returning at a brisk pace.

"My brother," said Brandt, "when the Brown Thrush shall look upon these presents, she will wish to know how long the White Eagle means to stay away. She will ask me if thou art betrothed to the lovely Antelope, of whom thou hast written more than once. What shall Thayendanegea say?"

"Say I am not betrothed to the fair maiden, only that she was kind to me as a sister, when I had no other friend. I will see the Brown Thrush again; I know not when. You can speak for me."

"The Antelope is very beautiful. I have seen her."

"When?"

"Last night. And I saw thy tokens. But I will not tell my sister. She would be broken-hearted, and sing no more. Farewell—if thou wilt not go with me."

"Farewell!" said Charles, and the chief rode furiously away.

CHAPTER IV.

The sun was descending in the azure west, when the carriage, in which were Julia and her Quaker guardians, reached the summit of the Jenny Jump Mountain.

As they descended towards the home they could see in the distance, Mr Schooley, endeavoured to describe to his family the condition of things they must be prepared to encounter there. Nor had the far-seeing Quaker neglected to make the necessary preparations for his removal to a place of supposed security. The preceding year he had contracted with some of the settlers to have him a dwelling and the usual out-houses completed by the ensuing spring; and he had sent up Van Wiggens with several slaves (the Quakers then were slave-holders) to girdle the trees for a new field, and to raise a crop of corn.

Van Wiggens had superintended everything. In his eyes the house was a palace and the lands a princely estate; for he was descended from one of the original Dutch families that lived and died on the broken hills of the highlands on the Hudson. And now he was to receive his reward. Fifty acres of good land at the foot of a hill in the vicinity were to be his own, to be conveyed to him and his heirs for ever. Nor was this all. Thomas Schooley was to furnish him with the implements of a blacksmith's shop, William having learned the trade in a Dutch smithy. The anvil, the bellows, &c., were already on the way, and Van Wiggens ought to have been a happy man, and his wife a happy woman, for they had been recently married.

At length the travellers were at the end of their journey, and William Van Wiggens and his wife Joan stood at the door to receive them.

Julia bounded from the carriage, and was the first to receive their greetings, as well as the more cordial one of her old nurse, Rose.

During the first day after their arrival, the Burlington family were engaged in explorations within and without the house.

All was freshness and novelty, and Julia ran from one object of admiration to another, like a gleesome school-girl. She was thankful for every thing and to every one, and always happy. A large black Newfoundland dog on the place became attached to her, and was her inseparable companion whenever she emerged from the house. This was a great satisfaction, as it would not have been prudent for her to venture on the extensive rambles she meditated, without some sort of a protector. Richard was too industrious to lose any time in that way, and the corn was yet unplanted. But Solo was a sufficient guard and companion.

During the first week of her sojourn at her forest home, Julia had learned from Rose that Charles Cameron's father lived in the neighbourhood, and had been visited by Charles himself. They laughed heartily over the subject of his picture and flower-writing, which had been so mysterious or unmeaning a thing to Richard and his unsophisticated parents.

But if there were mysteries hidden from the old folks, they likewise possessed their secret, of which the young people had never dreamed. Charles and Julia had been aware of the frequent conferences held with Mr Green, the surveyor, but could never have supposed the discussion referred to themselves, or could in the slightest degree affect their interests.

These conferences between Mr Green and Mr Schooley had reference to a rumour that gold existed in vast quantities in the cliff, at the base of which the hut of Mr Cameron was situated; and it was believed that the white-haired Scotchman had found access to it. Else why did he persist in maintaining so strict a seclusion? And how else could he have obtained the means of bestowing a collegiate education on his son? His man, MacSwine, had been sent twice a year to New York, from whom, of course, nothing could be learned; but it was inferred that he carried the precious metal with him to change for coin, with which the expenses of Charles, at Princeton, were defrayed.

By-and-bye, Mr Schooley introduced the subject to Charles on the occasion of one of his frequent visits, by proposing that his father should meet him on business regarding the boundary-lines of their properties.

Mr Green's share was to inform Julia of their suspicions as to the gold, and of their belief that it was on her land. Having done so, he sought to ascertain her sentiments in regard to a marriage with Richard, and to influence her in that aspirant's favour.

Neither the one nor other, however, obtained much satisfaction. Charles merely said he would convey Mr Schooley's message to his father, and Julia, professing no interest in the land-question, put the marriage one quietly aside.

Charles determined to seize the first opportunity, both to propose to his father the reception of friendly visitors, and to expostulate upon the impolicy of occupying so mean a house.

A fitting opportunity presented itself on the second morning after his promise had been given to Mr Schooley; but the information he elicited was such as thoroughly to startle him.

He learned for the first time that his father was the chief of the Clan Cameron—the gentle Lochiel, who had been reported as slain at Culloden, but had escaped to France, and having entered the service of the King of France, had fought against the British both in Europe and America.

"When peace was made," said the chief, "I did not return with my regiment to Europe, because the Indians had stolen my son. I sought you and found you. But then the last of the royal Stuarts had been arrested and conveyed from Paris by the orders of Louis, and I resigned my commission, (which was not accepted,) resolved to bestow an education on my son, and die in some peaceful seclusion. Now you know the reason of my standing aloof from society. A thousand guineas would induce many a wretch to cut short my existence. You need not frown. You could not prevent it, but you might avenge me."

To satisfy his son, however, now alarmed for his father's safety, the old man revealed to him the recesses of his hut.

"Follow me, my son," he said, lifting the torch, and striding toward the broad fireplace, that had been apparently cut from the solid rock, being a portion of the perpendicular cliff against which the hut was constructed. After removing the soot on one side of the rock, and introducing a strong iron bar into an orifice hitherto concealed, the entire rear wall, in one piece, began to swing forward on hidden hinges, like the ponderous door of a vault. The torch was then extinguished, and Charles was amazed to behold the subdued rays of the sun falling across the passage revealed within.

In silence he followed his father, and the next moment was standing in an elegant room, with an arched ceiling, through which the rays of the sun were streaming in a hundred places. The floor was strewn with rushes, and in the corners were several couches covered with velvet. The walls were hung with Gobelin tapestry, commemorating events in the history of Scotland and France. A small ebony table on one side was covered with books richly bound; and on the other, supported by a small stand, was an open Bible and an Episcopal prayer-book.

"This is not the work of enchantment," said the exiled chief, gazing at the surprised countenance of his son, "but partly of these hands. It is never good to be idle. While Hugh tilled the soil and you were at college, it was my daily task to excavate the rock and provide a refuge. But you have not seen all." He then led the way into two smaller rooms, some ten feet square, and both likewise illuminated by rays of the sun struggling through small fissures. In one of these rooms—the centre one, for they were in a suite, after the plan of the palaces in France—were arranged a great number of warlike implements. In the farthest was the wardrobe and the treasures, the latter secured in a strong iron-bound oaken chest. The lid was lifted, and Charles beheld several bags of coin. There were also costly jewels, and pieces of massive plate, the presents of princes and the heirlooms of the family.

"This is thy heritage," said the exile. "If it please thee to build a finer house, have thy will; but thy father will still abide in his stronghold."

"No, sir!" said Charles, with firmness. "Everything shall be sub-

ject to thy will—not mine. Thou were right in constructing such an abode. And, if I were thee, I would not see Mr Schooley, nor satisfy the curiosity of prying neighbours. Permit me, sir, to turn back all intruders. Against me no accusation can be brought; but some one whom thou hast met in foreign lands might recognize thy features."

"No, no. Our trusty Hugh will watch and guard the premises. He is faithful. And they may not know me. I had no exuberance of beard, and my hair was dark, until thou wast stolen. No, no! there is no danger now; and I will see this Quaker under the elm. No doubt they believe I find gold in the cliff, since they must have observed the dust from my excavations swept away by the freshets. Let us return to the humble hut. Hasten to thy friend, and say I will see him."

Charles was impatient to deliver the answer of his father. He directed his steps toward the abode of Julia with feelings very different from any he had hitherto experienced. His hatred to the king became inextinguishably violent, and he was glad he had resisted the artful suggestions of Governor Franklin.

Mr Schooley and Mr Green did not delay when informed that Mr Cameron would receive them. They mounted their horses and trotted briskly away. And, while Mrs Schooley's foot was in rapid motion at the wheel, furnishing the threads for the loom, Julia and Charles wandered away toward the grove near the end of the lane.

On one side of the lane, Richard and the negroes were at work planting the late corn.

"I suppose, Julia," said Richard, his hoe suspended in the air, as the couple passed slowly along, "thou hast been telling thy friend about our claim to the land. Thou mayst promise, if there be much gold in the cliff, that a share of it shall remain for his father."

"Oh, pray don't be too liberal, friend Richard," said Charles. "My father don't value gold as much as you do the common dust; and as for me, no doubt Julia will speak kindly in my behalf."

"Do so, Julia," said Richard; "and whatever thou dost promise will be approved by me."

The amused pair pursued their way, and never paused until they reached the great sycamore on the margin of a trout-brook at the eastern extremity of the farm. Here they sat upon a moss-covered stone partly buried in the soil, placed there, perhaps, by human hands, to mark the spot of a battle between hostile tribes of the forest. Animals, arrows, and birds, were cut on one side of its surface. On the other, and almost illegible, were rude figures of men wielding the tomahawk and scalping-knife, besides many nondescript marks and characters. Charles read the meaning, and not only understood the number of warriors that had been engaged, but the name of the tribe which had conquered. He could not tell when the conflict had taken place, but it was evidently at a remote period.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, upon lifting his eyes and beholding recently-made figures upon the smooth bark of the sycamore, "a Seneca chief has been here within the last twenty-four hours!"

"And with an evil intent, think you?" asked Julia, with emotion, observing the excited gaze of the young man.

"I fear so, Julia," said he. "He threatens us. Do you not see the serpent winding round the eagle, and the arrow piercing the antelope?"

"And they call you the White Eagle and me the Antelope? Why should they threaten us?"

"They would have me with them again. And they suppose the Antelope withholds me from returning to the Brown Thrush, the sister of Thayendanegea."

"And perhaps she loves you!"

"She called me brother."

"But I have learned that white captives often marry their brown sisters."

"True. But I will never do so."

"But does she not love thee?"

"She does. But what then?"

"Fly to her!"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because, Julia, I love only thee, and will remain."

"You never said so before," replied the girl after a long pause.

"But I have long felt it, and you could not have been wholly ignorant of it. Even Shawuskukhkung, who came hither with me, and is now on the lakes, pleading with his kindred to remain at peace, observed it. Mr Livingston suspected it; and now I avow it. Oh, do not drive me back to the wild forest! I never regarded the Brown Thrush otherwise than as a dear sister. Do not drive me away. I am not the outcast they suppose. My father is of gentle blood. Only permit me to love thee, and let thy friendship continue, and that is all I will require, until a proper time arrives for me to claim your hand in the face of the world."

"Charles, you know I have ever esteemed you; but I cannot promise."

"Not promise to continue your friendship? to ramble with me as usual over the hills and through the valleys?—to——"

"Oh, I think I may promise that—but——"

"That is all I ask at this time. I know that, until you arrive at a certain age, your guardian has power over you. I ask nothing but a continuance of your friendly regard until a proper moment for me to apply to your guardian. There is one other thing, however:—that you would make no pledge, under any circumstances, to Richard. Do you promise me this?"

"I do, Charles! And let it be a solemn compact!"

"Solemnly between us!" said Charles, pressing her hand against his heart. "For, Julia, the time may come when we must be separated,—when I may be a captive, or an outlaw with a price upon my head; for I will never draw sword or wield tomahawk in behalf of King George. Mr Livingston, Mr Stockton, Doctor Witherspoon, and most of the leading characters, will resist the tyranny of the king. And my father says that when a rebellion is headed by the great personages of a country, after due deliberation and formal confederation, the people must win their freedom."

"The devil he does!" said a broad-chested, red-haired man, of vigorous step and scowling features, who came from the opposite side of the huge sycamore and confronted the unsuspecting pair.

"Who are you?" demanded Charles, leaping up and grasping his

tomahawk, which he had carried in his belt after hearing the history of his father.

"I am a loyal subject of King George III., and you are a rebel!"

"And you have been eavesdropping? But you shall not repeat what you have heard!" And the youth hurled his tomahawk at the head of the intruder. Julia uttered a scream at the moment, and strove to defeat his aim. She was successful. The instrument penetrated the tree several inches above the mark, and remained firmly fixed in the wood.

"Now is *my* time!" said the stranger, pale and quivering; for the assault had evidently not been anticipated, and he had made but a hair-breadth escape."

"Nay! do not fire!" exclaimed Julia, throwing her slight form between his rifle and her lover. "I saved thy life," she continued, "and you shall not take his without first killing me!"

"I believe you would die to save him," said the stranger, lowering his gun. "But you must teach him better manners than to throw his tomahawk at every one he meets, and before he learns whether they are his friends or his foes."

"Sir, you could not be the first," said Charles; "and I defy thee still, although unarmed."

"Merely because I happened to hear the words you were speaking to this maiden? Know, sir, that the tree is hollow, the entrance being on the opposite side. I was in it before you came hither."

"And what were you doing there?"

"I will tell you, seeing you have no secrets from me. Know, then, that I, too, can read the picture-writing as well as yourself—nay, better, for I understood by the figures that the Seneca chief would return in a few hours. I fell asleep awaiting him, and was awakened by you. I know you both, and will not retain the advantage. I am Bonnel Moody, at your service, and bear a commission in the service of the king. And I am now on duty, being sent hither by one of the royal governors to ascertain the sentiments of the people."

"And you have learned the sentiments of one of them," said Charles, smiling.

"But sentiments change, like the seasons; and, when you hear what I have been charged to speak to Mr Schooley, perhaps your opinions may be modified. My mission is to spread information as well as to obtain it; to conciliate, rather than to incense. Hence, I trust there will be no further strife between us."

"I thank you for those words, Mr Moody," said Julia.

"And fear not that I will repeat the speeches I have heard, unless forced to do so in the discharge of my duty," continued the intruder, with a slight smile.

"I warn you, sir!" said Charles. "Utter but one word you have heard, and we are deadly enemies for ever. Let us return, Julia. You still tremble."

Charles had not gone many paces before he was overtaken by Moody.

"Take your tomahawk, sir," said Moody, placing the glittering hatchet in the hand of the youth. "You have a strong arm, sir. I could hardly loosen it. And, as the maiden may not always be present when we meet, I hope it will never be aimed at the same target again. Let us be friends."

"It cannot be. Avoid my path, and I will not seek yours."

"It must be as you decide," said Moody, gravely. "But I may keep your company until we arrive at the house, since I have important messages for Mr Schooley."

"He is not at home, sir," said Julia. "He and Mr Green have visited Mr Cameron, Charles's father."

"The old man of the gold-mine? Then I will join them there; and I know a nearer way than through the lane. A fair morning to you both," he continued, bowing very low, and striding through the wood in a divergent direction.

"And be careful you do not again play the eavesdropper," said Charles; for Hugh MacSwine has a sharp tusk."

"Do not irritate him, Charles!" said Julia, clinging with increased tenacity to his arm.

"Julia," said Charles, in a sad tone, "that man is the only witness to our vows."

"No, Charles, one in heaven heard them! They say such vows are registered in heaven, and there is no reason to doubt it. And if it be so, it must be a grievous thing to break them! I hope you made no similar pledges to the sister of the Mohawk chief."

"Indeed no, Julia. And she will acquit me of it; but she knows not of my regard for you. She is meek and forgiving, and seldom swayed by passion; but her brother is sometimes fierce and furious. He loves me, and would kill me rather than lose me; but we must be separated."

"And will he not kill you?"

"Not if I can help it. But he is patient, too, at times, and prudent and wise, as well as affectionate. He is only terrible when in one of his ungovernable spasms. He still hopes I will return and marry his sister; and I do not think he would listen to the words of this Moody, if he were to repeat what he heard at the sycamore." In this manner they conversed until they were joined by Richard, who, having faithfully done a half-day's work, was repairing to the house for his dinner.

CHAPTER V.

CHARLES accepted Richard's invitation to dine with him. Rose brought in the smoking fowls and other viands, and they fared sumptuously. Whilst they thus fared, Paddy, in a most unlooked-for manner, burst in upon the company. He sprang into the room and overturned the table, over which he fell, sprawling to the floor. Before any one had time to demand an explanation, he bawled out, "Indians! the savage Indians!"

"Where?" asked Richard, jumping up, and manifesting some alarm.

"Be calm, Richard. Thee need not fear," said Mrs Schooley. "Thou knowest the chiefs have often been the guests of thy father in Burlington, and thee need not fear them here."

"How many did you see?" asked Charles.

"I don't know how many, Misther Charles," said Paddy. "But one of the blackguards was laning over the palings close be my head when I was sticking the marrow-fat pays. He was as close to me as I am to you at this moment."

"Then it could not have been his purpose to kill you," said Julia, "or he might have done it easily."

"Och, and I should never have been the wiser! What a country to live in! Nothing but rattlesnakes and blackguard Indians!"

"Thee must not term them so, Patrick," said Mrs Schooley; "for if they should hear thee, they might do thee some mischief."

"I will call them gintlemen, if they'll only let me sculp alone. I hope they did not hear me. I'm sure I beg their pardon if they did."

Charles stepped to the door and uttered a friendly call in the Seneca language; and the solitary Indian, who had so much alarmed the gardener, approached from the position he had occupied when Paddy beheld him, and from which he had not moved. He entered the house, shaking hands with all the inmates, and uttering the usual "How do?" Paddy hesitated and squirmed a great deal, but yielded when told by Charles that if he refused to extend his hand it might be considered as a token of hostility.

The Indian wore upon his garment a great many bears'-claws and porcupine-quills; and behind, hanging from his feathered head-dress was the skin of a large rattlesnake, reaching nearly to his heels. The rattles were still on the lower end of it, and at every motion of his body they gave forth the startling sound so terrifically familiar to the ears of the first settlers of every portion of the country.

The Indian was invited to eat as soon as Rose could readjust the table. When he had finished eating, Mrs Schooley lighted his pipe, and Charles smoked with him.

"My Seneca brother," said Charles, in the Indian language, "has threatened the White Eagle. It was done in sport, was it not?"

"The Rattlesnake listened to the voice of the great chief, Captain Pipe, and did his bidding. The Rattlesnake does not aim his fangs at the White Eagle."

"The White Eagle is glad to hear it, and he smokes the pipe of peace with his brother. But he would have the Seneca chief listen to his voice also. He would have him say to the great Captain Pipe that he fears him not, nor any other captain who threatens at a distance; but, that if the Antelope should be molested, the White Eagle would soar to the top of the highest mountain, whence he could see his farthest enemy; and the bird of the fleetest wing would soon alight upon him."

The Seneca promised to deliver the message, and at the same time declared that Thayendanegea was entirely ignorant of what had been done to offend his brother.

Charles learned from this Indian, who was but a minor chief, that the colonists had taken the fort at Ticonderoga, and that preparations for war were being made everywhere in the North.

The Seneca soon after set out in quest of Moody, for whom he had certain messages.

Meantime the interview with the mysterious occupant of the humble hut took place under the elm on the margin of the stream that swept along the base of the cliff. Mr Cameron did not apologize for not offering to entertain his visitors within the house, but proceeded to business without delay. And when, to the utter astonishment of Mr Schooley, he exhibited his title, (it was for five thousand acres, derived from the heirs of Edward Byllirge, one of the original purchasers from Lord

Berkeley, who had his title from the Duke of York,) and produced a plot made by John Rockhill, a noted surveyor still living, neither Mr Green nor the Quaker had a word to say against the correctness of his lines or the validity of his title.

"And now, gentlemen," said the exile, "I believe our business is at an end, and we must part as strangers. If this examination into my title had not been made a pretext for inspecting my premises, I might have desired a more social intercourse with my neighbours."

When he ceased speaking, Moody, who, as usual, had been a concealed auditor, came forward and placed sealed packets in the hands of Mr Schooley, whom he knew by his Quaker hat and coat. He then wandered carelessly aside, while Mr Schooley broke open the seals. They contained letters both from New York and Burlington. Moody had just arrived from the former place, and the Indian (who now made his appearance, "how-doing" and shaking hands) from the latter. From Governor Franklin he brought a commission, creating Thomas Schooley a justice of the peace.

The Indian, true to his instinct, followed Moody's trail, and entered the small ravine which opened into the valley where the interview had been held.

"No, mon! I tell ye no! Gae back, or I'll dirk you!" Such were the words spoken a moment after, in a loud voice, by Hugh MacSwine. And when all eyes were turned in the direction of the hut, Moody and the Indian were seen retreating, driven back by Hugh.

"If you scratch us with your Scotch dirk, I'll send a ball through you!" said Moody, half presenting his rifle.

The Indian uttered one of his warwhoops and brandished his tomahawk. Mr Schooley and Mr Green became much excited. The first by virtue of the commission he had received, besought and even commanded the white man to keep the peace; while the latter, who knew something of the Seneca language, warned the Indian against shedding blood. The white-haired exile lifted a small horn to his lips and sounded a shrill blast, which was answered by another from the hut of a Mr M'Arthur, living near the summit of the range of hills. The faint echoes of several other blasts were then discernible in the distance, but did not seem to be comprehended by Moody, who was still intent upon the execution of his purpose.

"I call upon you, Mr Schooley," said he, "by virtue of your commission, to arrest these men in the name of the king. Here is a paper given me several months ago by Sir John Johnson, in which is described a certain fugitive from justice, and for whose arrest and delivery into the custody of any of his Majesty's officers a reward of one thousand guineas has been offered."

"Dost thou suppose this Hugh the one?" asked Mr Schooley.

"No; but the pale Scotchman, if his hair were not so white, would answer the description," said Moody, lifting the paper before Mr S.'s face.

"Art thou the man?" asked Mr Schooley, turning to Mr Cameron.

"What man?" was the reply.

"The Highland laird who fled with the Pretender," said Moody.

But the exile made no reply, while Hugh gazed steadily up the ravine.

"I see," continued Mr Schooley, having adjusted his spectacles, and

holding the document before his eyes with both hands, "I see that John Johnson, known as Sir John, hath been charged by his Majesty's ministers to seek a certain fugitive, supposed to have taken refuge in the hills of New Jersey, whose description followeth, &c. Truly, my friend," he continued, turning to the exile, "thou dost answer the description in every thing but the colour of thy hair Bless my life! What canst thou say to all this?"

"Not one word will I say to you," replied the chief. "If it must be answered, let it be before a proper tribunal."

"Proper tribunal! Thee forgets I am one of the king's justices of the peace."

"I do not recognise the king's authority. What say you, my friends?"

"Down with the usurper!" was the cry of some half-dozen voices and the next instant a number of the brawny sons of Scotland, with dirks and rifles, emerged from the bushes and stood in a line before the amazed magistrate.

"What men are these?" demanded Thomas.

"They are the Scotchmen alluded to in this paper," said Moody; "and they are too strong for us," he added, in a whisper.

Of course the statue-like Scots, who had descended from the hills, and now stood in imperturbable composure, each grasping his gun, put to flight for the time the purpose of making the arrest in the king's name. Moody slowly withdrew, in company with Mr Schooley; Mr Green and the Indian followed, while the exiled chief motioned his small band of Highlanders to return to their homes. He then entered his hut, and laid before Charles some papers he had just received from New Brunswick by the hands of one of Hugh's runners,—a red-haired boy, of an idiotic appearance, but of reliable shrewdness, called Skippie.

By these documents Charles learned that he had been appointed captain of a company of minute-men, to be raised in his county. Governor Franklin was declared a public enemy by Congress, and his seizure ordered—by the advice, it was said, of his own father. The Continental Congress had further decreed that if the Quakers could not conscientiously take the oath prescribed by them, they might subscribe a declaration as follows:—"*I agree to the above association, as far as the same is consistent with my religious principles.*" As many believed it a Christian duty to be true to the king, they found no difficulty in signing when hard pressed. Such was the case in many localities where the whigs were the most numerous. But those who refused were to be disarmed, to give security for their peaceable conduct, and to "pay the expenses attending thereon." And the captains in the township, or the country committees, were to attend to the matter without delay, and were empowered to arrest and imprison dangerous persons at discretion, and all who would not muster when required, armed as the law directed, were to pay ten shillings for each offence, recoverable by a distress warrant.

"Now you are invested with quite as much authority," said the elder Cameron smiling, "as the Quaker guardian of Julia Lane."

"It seems so, sir," said Charles; "but I shall be embarrassed in the exercise of it."

"You will accept the appointment, then?"

"Certainly, if you advise it, since Mr Livingstone accepts the appointment bestowed on him."

"You have my permission. And I would advise you to enroll your company with as little delay as possible, and lodge this Moody in the new jail at Newton,—else he will attempt to capture your father, not from motives of duty, but for the sake of the reward."

"True, sir!" cried Charles, starting up. "It must not be delayed. As I came from Mr Schooley's I crossed a trail in the woods, which arrested my attention. A dozen men had passed since morning, and they were evidently seeking to conceal their presence. It was not a mile distant, and they must be lurking in this vicinity."

"Were they Indians?" asked his father, in some concern.

"No, sir. I marked their footprints. They have been guided by one, however. It is the tory gang of this Moody. I must be up and doing, sir, for we cannot tell what moment they will fall upon us."

"Stay," said his father. "You must remain till morning. It is now growing dark. You know we are impregnable in our defences. To-morrow, when the sun again illuminates the paths, you may seek these robbers. Hugh, barricade the door; but first admit the bloodhound. He seems to snuff the foe," he continued, when the whining animal was called in and the lighted torch revealed his gleaming eyes as he crouched beside the door.

"They will attack us to-night!" said Charles.

"They would depart in peace, if I would only accompany them," said his father.

"Rather let every one of them perish! What say you, Hugh?" exclaimed Charles.

"Kill!" was Hugh's reply.

Charles was permitted by his father to prize the ponderous stone door slightly open, so that they might readily escape in the event of a sudden emergency.

Hugh prepared the supper, which was heartily eaten, as if the presence of danger could produce no diminution of appetite.

Time wore on until the usual hour for rest, and still the apprehended assault had not been made.

"They must have abandoned the project," said Charles, breaking the silence which had prevailed for some moments.

"Perhaps not," said his father, rousing from one of the prolonged reveries to which he was addicted, and taking up one of the jewelled pistols that lay on the table, which had been presented him by the unfortunate Charles Edward. "But no matter," he continued; "there will be strife sufficient before this contest is ended. And the usurper will lose. America will be lost. And the last of the royal line of Stuarts, degenerate as he is, will have the melancholy satisfaction of witnessing it."

The bloodhound bayed twice, and sprang against the door, which he gnawed with his teeth.

"I thought so!" said the exile; "and it is quite likely the leader of the party has been listening to my words."

"It is certain!" said Moody, without, "we have heard enough. I have with me some fourteen men, and resistance will be in vain. In the king's name, I bid you open the door."

"The devil's name would be quite as potential here as the king's," said Charles; "but neither will avail."

"We will see," replied Moody; and the next moment a dull, heavy blow sounded on the door, and nearly prostrated it. They had lifted up a heavy log and projected it forward like a battering-ram.

"Awa' with you! awa' with you, mon!" said Hugh, "or——"

"Or what?" demanded Moody. "We are armed, and quite ready to meet you in that way. But we do not wish to take the life of the prisoner, if we can avoid it."

"No," said the aged exile; "there might be some difficulty in proving my identity and in obtaining the reward."

"If you have money," said Moody, restraining his men through the parley, "we will listen to terms. Have you no disposition to offer a ransom?"

"None whatever!" said Charles, and then fired his rifle through the door. The log held in readiness for the renewal of the assault, was heard to fall, and doubtless one of the assailants had been wounded.

A moment after, ten or twelve shots were fired by the party without, and the door was riddled with their bullets; but no injury was sustained by those within, who had anticipated such an occurrence.

"Father," said Charles, "as they have a great superiority of numbers, would it not be well to summon our friends from the hills?"

"It would be well, but it is not practicable. However," continued the old man, "these assailants will not be able to injure us."

"You are mistaken!" cried Moody, ever listening.

"Then do your worst! we defy you!" said the elder Cameron.

"What will they do!" asked Charles, to whom it was apparent they were not resorting again to the heavy timber with which to force the door.

"They will try to burn us out," said his father, in a whisper.

"They may destroy the hut," said Charles, "but not injure us."

"They can do no more than burn the outside shell," said his father, smiling. "Do you not observe how heavily and completely the interior is plastered? The cement is thirteen inches in thickness. The logs outside will burn and fall to the ground; but the house itself will remain, to astonish them, and to furnish stories for the superstitious. Come; let us retreat into the rock. I hear the crackling flames already, and the light will bring down my little clan on the rear. Come, Hugh, unless you would be roasted like a wild boar."

"Let me stay, sir, until I feel too warm," was MacSwine's reply; and the father and son retreated into the excavated rock.

Very soon the cliffs of the valley, the crests of the hills, and the tops of the distant woods, were tinged with the crimson glare of the burning house. The wolves ceased their howling, and the owl, stricken blind, flapped down to the earth in mad career.

"Open the door, before it's too late!" cried Moody.

"Hoot, mon, what're you impatient about?" was the response of MacSwine.

"Where are the others? Why don't they speak?"

"Gone, mon, where you canna' hear 'em."

"Are they smothered? suffocated?"

"It's nane o' your business."

"You seem to take it very coolly."

"Yes, I'm smoking in the chimney-corner."

"Smoking, are you? I guess you'll soon be burning."

"I'm smoking my pipe, mon, and you're ower impudent to be disturbing ane."

This was true. MacSwine enjoyed his pipe when the roof was in a blaze and the consuming logs were falling from the sides of the hut. Yet it was rather warm within to be comfortable; but the surly Scot determined to bear it. He posted himself in the fireplace for the benefit of the draught; but the current of heated air forced him at last to step through the aperture and join his master. He did not remain long, however, before the heat diminished in intensity as the burning logs fell away, and he was able to breathe again in the hut, which he re-entered, closing the stone door behind him.

"The old boy must be roasted too, by this time," said Moody.

"The de'il you say?" responded MacSwine.

"He *is* the devil, I believe!" cried one of the gang.

"Knock a hole through the infernal lime," said Moody. "and let us see him."

This was not an easy matter. Failing to accomplish it, they once more resolved to assail the door, which had escaped the flames by being deeply sunk in the wall. But, before the first blow was aimed, MacSwine sent another bullet through, and the timber was again heard to fall.

"He's broken my arm!" cried one of the men, "and I'll have nothing more to do with 'em."

Shortly after, several shots were fired on the right, and then could be heard the tramp of running men. Another minute, and all was quiet. The Highlanders, aroused by the light, had come to the rescue of their loved chieftain, and at the first discharge Moody and his robbers made a precipitate retreat.

In the morning Charles was eager for immediate pursuit. But the aged chief forbade it. Before attempting to punish Moody, it would be prudent first to ascertain precisely the sentiments of the people.

Charles yielded to the chief's advice; and, instead of hunting Moody, aided in thoroughly repairing his father's hut.

During the day, and as the news of the assault spread over the country, it was gratifying to Charles to receive tenders of assistance from many persons hitherto total strangers to him; and it soon became apparent that Moody had but few sympathizers and abettors in the neighbourhood. This was a cheering sign, and Charles lost no time in communicating to the people the substance of the documents he had received from the Colonial Convention; and before the eve of the third day he had the names of forty "minute-men" enrolled on his list. His sergeant was a herculean Irishman, by the name of Timothy Murphy,—a well-digger up the country, whose life had been saved by Charles when in the hands of the Indians.

One day, leaving Tim in charge of the recruiting service, Charles set out in the direction of Mr Schooley's plantation.

He was surprised, when approaching the smithy of Van Wiggens, to find a sign hung out in front of the dwelling with a huge bear roughly painted on it.

"What does that mean, Will?" asked Charles.

"My Joan's doings," said Van Wiggens, wiping the perspiration from his fat cheeks with his leather apron, blackened with the dust of the shop. "You see. dese cross-roads are dravelled more and more, and te people keept stopping at our house and living on us. So Joan has set up a davern, and *I* painted to Black Bear sign."

"I hope the entertainment won't be as rough as the sign, Will."

"Dat's uncertain, and tepends on te sort of guests that come. She's a fine laty, captain," he continued, in a whisper, "but she's a Tartar! As soon as she was mistress of her own house, she began to scold me about every ding."

"She did? I suppose you gave her a taste of your authority, as the Indians do their scolding squaws."

"No, captain; dey always said Vill Wan Viggens and his dog" (a small brown animal of mongrel breed, crossed principally with the cur) "didn't fear man or teiffle—but didn't say vomen."

"I understand. Well, Will, suppose you join my company?"

"Keep tark!" replied Will, in a very low whisper; "I see Joan's cap bobbing up in te pea-patch. I can't stand it much longer I tell you! She owns a pig nigger, you know, who larnt his trade in Burlington, and she says he can shoe a horse better as me. Tam if I don't go mit you! Captain, when you're ready to go after te red-roats or te savages, send a note here for Vill and his dog."

Charles shook hands with the poor hen-pecked blacksmith, and promised not to forget him and his dog.

He soon after fell in with Richard Schooley, resting on his plough in a corner of the fence. Richard stared at him in silence, and with something like an expression of anger on his stoical brow.

Charles frankly greeted him: but observing that it was not returned, inquired the cause. The young Quaker at once gave as the reason Charles's attentions to Julia.

As may well be conjectured, this gave his rival an opportunity he was not slow to take advantage of, to banter him on the matter, and then inviting him to follow to the house, he put spurs to his steed, and never paused until he reached the stile in front of the dwelling.

He was met in the entry by Julia, who chanced to be passing out, accompanied by her faithful dog. She wore a troubled countenance, which soon vanished, however, in the hearty greetings that followed.

"Meet me at the sycamore," Charles whispered, as he passed on to accost Mr Schooley, whose approaching step his keen ear had detected. Julia vanished in silence, which was a sufficient response for the lover.

"Good-morning, Charles," said Mr Schooley; "I have wished to see thee on serious matters," he continued, as he led the young man into the sitting-room, where Mrs Schooley's foot was propelling the incessant spinning-wheel. She nodded her staid chin at him, and stared a brief moment through her spectacles.

"I am sorry, Charles," said Mr Schooley, when they were seated, "that thy father is truly the rebel laird who waged war against the King of Great Britain."

"And I am proud it, sir!" said Charles.

"I hope thee will be calm. Thee knows it is a grievous offence for one to take up arms against the sovereign; and I desire thee to pay particular attention to what I am going to say. Thou knowest I am a

magistrate; it is my duty to arrest any offender that may be pointed out within the limits of my jurisdiction. Thy father confesses he is the individual described in the document that Bonnel received from John Johnston, called Sir John. Thy father hath resisted the king's authority——"

"Certainly," said Charles; "he resisted the king's claim to the throne."

"Thee knows how deadly an offence that was. Well, it is incumbent on me to discharge my duty, else my commission becomes derelict. Thee knows, if thy father be taken, he will not be entitled to a trial, as he hath been condemned already. The king's signature will merely be required to his death-warrant, and then he must be executed. Now, inasmuch as I dislike being made the instrument of the vengeance of the law, and as I have still a regard for thee, notwithstanding thou hast done very wrong in attempting to woo away my ward, I confess to thee that I feel an inclination—which the monitor within seems hourly to strengthen—to decline the commission sent me. But then, Charles, thee knows, if I would keep myself entirely aloof from implication, there must be an utter severance between every member of my family and those who foolishly embark in the rebellion."

"I understand thee, Thomas. Thou canst not see that this outburst is a revolution, instead of a rebellion. And thou wouldst stipulate that I should cease to visit Julia, the only Christian friend I ever knew besides my father, so that her fortune—which I do protest forms no portion of my motive in seeking her hand—may remain with thine, and become thy son's when thou art dead (and all must die) and canst not even be a witness of the happiness his wealth is to secure him? But Julia must be the arbitress of her own fate! Her father never supposed he was delegating to you the privilege of choosing a husband for his daughter; and, if it had been his purpose to bestow her lands upon your family, he might have done it in a more direct manner. No, Thomas; I will make no such compact with thee."

"Then thee knows the consequence. I must not be implicated with my ward if she casts her lot among the rebels. I must convince John—called Sir John—that I am a loyal subject. I must deliver thy father into the custody of his Majesty's governor of this colony."

"Very well. But, Thomas, thy messengers travel very slowly, else thou wouldst have known, as I do, that William Franklin, late his Majesty's governor, is now a prisoner, having been declared a public enemy by Congress; and his successor will be my friend, and Julia's friend, and my father's friend, William Livingston. And now *I* have a duty to perform. By these orders it is my duty to require thy signature to this," continued Charles, placing a form of the Declaration on the table; "and power is given me to arrest those who decline it, if they do not give security for their good conduct. Be not so pale, Mary, for thou art not in danger. I will be his surety. I do not believe that Thomas advised the attack on my father's house——"

"Thee speaks truly, Charles," said Mr Schooley.

"No. I have never known one of thy society to counsel violence. But they are not slow to grasp at the wealth squandered by others; and, consequently, I think they should not be exempted from contributing something to defray the expenses of a just war, in which the government that protects them may be involved, even if they are opposed to the

shedding of blood. Therefore, if thy son Richard will not join the ranks, armed as the law directs, he must be prepared to bear the expenses of a substitute."

Charles then mounted his horse and galloped to the sycamore overshadowing the Council Rock; and when Richard joined his parents a few minutes after, and learned what had been said in relation to him, he could only stare in blank amazement.

Julia had been some time awaiting Charles. Soon each knew all the other had to tell of the anxiety of Julia's guardian, to secure the comfort of Mr Richard; but as to other more interesting matters, they were suddenly cut short by Julia, who, looking on her lover exclaimed, "Why do you stare so? Oh, there are new pictures on the tree! Read them for me," she added, when they had risen.

"Blue Pigeon has arrived with a message from my mother!"

"From your mother? Oh, yes, I remember; you told me she was ever indulgent and affectionate, and they called her——"

"Gentle Moonlight. And she was truly gentle. And Blue Pigeon was one of my most loved companions."

"But here is the song-bird again—the same painted by the other Indian. Its mouth is open, and it sings for thy return."

"My sister joins my brother in the message. I will know more when I see Blue Pigeon."

"Is it right to call the Thrush thy sister? Have you not said the mother who adopted thee was only the aunt of Brandt and his sister? How, then, can they be your sister and brother?"

"Gentle Moonlight," said Charles, with emotion, "lost her husband in battle, and her only child, a little son, sickened and died. This was before my capture. After her bereavement, Brandt and his sister called her mother; her affection was bestowed on them, and they seemed to love their aunt almost as well as their true mother. Their mother, seeing this, prevailed on Sir John Johnston to procure a white captive for her sister, on whom her love might be lavished. Sir John complied, and I was the captive. Gentle Moonlight loved me as fondly as she had done her own lost son, while I was taught to call Brandt my brother and Brown Thrush my sister."

"And they now wish you to return—to marry Brown Thrush, and remain with them—to—"

"I do not know what may be required of me. I must see this runner, this old playmate of mine, and hear what he has to say. But, Julia, whatever I may do, whatever may be my fate, you alone have my heart. It is thine. But still I must feel a brother's affection for my forest sister. A more gentle and loving creature does not exist. She would have died for me, and——"

"She loves you! But it is no fault of thine. Poor unhappy girl! I wish she were my companion here, or I were with the Gentle Monlight——"

"Nay, Julia, you know not what you say! You know not how soon the Iroquois may be hurling the tomahawk at the head of our race and kindred; then the Gentle Moonlight and the singing Thrush must be witnesses of the tortures inflicted upon prisoners. They will be chilled by the howls of the Malcha Manito which dwells in the shrivelled bosom of Queen Esther—the remorseless Catherine Montour——"

"Oh! name her not! I have heard of her cruelties—and she not an Indian!"

"No, Julia. She is the daughter of the French governor, Frontenac, it is believed, and was made queen by the Senecas. She carries a war-club and scalping-knife, and slays the miserable prisoners with her own hands!"

"Horrible! No! I would not behold her. Nor would I have thee see her. But I fear this messenger will summon thee away."

"I would not obey any summons of hers. She is a Seneca. Among the Indians I am of the bird tribe, having taken the name of White Eagle, which was conferred by Gentle Moonlight, when they made me a chief. I was under the usual age, but had saved the life of Brandt. I will tell thee the manner of it some other time. Queen Esther's totem is the wolf."

"Then you might intermarry with the feathered tribe," said Julia, smiling; "and of course, the thrush is one of them."

"No," said Charles; "it is not permitted for those of the same totems to marry."

"Indeed?"

"But then," he continued, "my forest sister's totem is the turtle, or tortoise.

"And then, you might marry her?"

"Perhaps, if I desired it. But see! Solo is bristling up, and growls. Behold, yonder comes Blue Pigeon! He has sought me at my father's house, and returns to the tree. Be quiet, Solo! And my poor horse Yameder pricks up his ears. Will you remain? You may, if you desire it; but you will not understand our language."

"Yes, I will remain."

When the Blue Pigeon recognised Charles, after a long pause, he sprang forward, clasped him in his arms, and, upon being informed that Julia was the Antelope of whom he had doubtless heard Brandt speak, he offered his hand, and uttered the word "sister" in good English. And Julia, struck by his noble features and perfect form, called him "brother."

"Now, my brother," said Charles, "my ear is open. I am ready to hear the words of my mother."

The message was, as Charles expected, from his forest-mother, desiring his early return. The reply he sent was that he would come; but could not say when. He must consult his father, and also General Livingston.

"They will keep you with them, or kill you if you again put yourself in their power," said Julia.

"No—I fear nothing. They durst not injure me. War is not declared by them. I may prevent it. If not, I can return hither."

"But will they really consent to it?"

"I suppose so. If not, I could easily escape. Adieu. I must see my father and send his runner, the boy Skippie, to General Livingston, or whatever his title may be by this time. Have your letter for Kate in readiness; but do not prevail on her to urge her father to decide against my visit to the lakes. It is only a few days' travel."

He galloped away, while the maiden, with a throbbing bosom, gazed after him, until he vanished from her sight. She then turned her foot-

steps toward home, warbling a plaintive ditty, and thinking of the Indian maiden who bore the name of one of the sweetest of wild-wood songsters.

CHAPTER VI.

As had been predicted, William Livingston had been appointed governor by the people's Colonial Legislature; and at the moment when Skippie was admitted into his cabinet the governor was inditing a letter to Charles, urging him to make an excursion into the Indian country for the purpose of ascertaining the intentions of the tribes regarding the war with the mother country, which was now waged in earnest; so that the visit of the young man to the fondly-remembered scenes and friends of his youth was to meet no impediment in that quarter.

And soon after Skippie's return the father of Charles yielded a reluctant consent to the journey. Mr Schooley, whose discretion led him to adopt an obscure and inoffensive position between the contending parties, but who could not be induced to relinquish the idea of marrying his son Richard to Julia, heartily approved the project. But Julia's objections remained to be overcome. Charles met her almost daily at the sycamore-tree, and was still beguiled of many weeks which might have sufficed for performing the journey.

Meantime, there were rumours of preparations on the part of the Indians to attack the settlements. These accounts, so far as it regarded the readiness of the Iroquois to commence active hostilities immediately, were discredited by Charles. He rightly attributed them to the instructions of Moody and other tories, issued by the agents of the crown as a means of keeping the people in continual alarm, and preventing them from sending succour to the American army.

Nevertheless, it was a well-ascertained fact that several small parties of roving savages had committed depredations near the Gap and in the valleys on both sides of the Blue Mountain. A number of horses had been stolen, and one or two men had been killed.

Months had now passed since Charles had promised to visit his Indian forest-mother, and he still lingered in the valley where dwelt his father and Julia. His father, having at first given permission for the journey with great reluctance, at length urged him to set out, since Governor Livingston desired it, and he had pledged his word to make the visit.

Finally, the day of setting out was appointed a fortnight in advance, and every preparation was made for the event. Charles decided to resume his Indian dress; and as Julia superintended its completion, it may be presumed it was not deficient in tasteful decoration.

Sergeant Murphy was to be left in charge of the company which had been formed. The men had been assembled several times for parade, armed with their own rifles, and then dismissed to their houses. No orders came for them to remain in their own county. Richard Schooley had failed to muster; and his father did not neglect to pay the fine which Murphy was charged to collect.

Mrs Van Wiggen's tavern and shop prospered very well. Her husband, as he had feared, became a mere cipher under the thumb of his

tyrannical spouse. But, about the time of the departure of Charles, he was recalled to the plantation of his patron to act again in the capacity of overseer, in place of Peter Shaver, who had been his successor in office, but who becoming dissatisfied with his Quaker employer, as it was supposed, or his wages, had absconded. No one knew whither he had gone. The last time he had been seen was when setting out one morning on his crop-eared Indian pony with a bag of grain, which he said he intended to have ground at a mill some miles distant. His object was professedly to ascertain if the Quaker miller they usually patronized had been in the habit of taking excessive toll. Peter was a short, fat man, something like Van Wiggens, and was distinctly remembered by all who had once seen him. If he had not absconded, the supposition was that he had been killed.

At length the day of departure arrived. Charles had taken leave of Julia under the sycamore-tree, decked in his elegant Indian costume; his aged father had bestowed his blessing upon him, and Charles, directing toward the west, disappeared in the forest, followed by the cheers of his friends and the light pursuing step of Skippie, the sandy-haired boy, of whom it was said he never spoke with tongue so much as by his looks and features.

Once more in the solitude of the forest, Charles loosened the reins and permitted his noble steed to walk leisurely along the path. It was one of the old war-paths of the Indians, leading to the great lakes of the North-west; and, although it had become overgrown and indistinct to those unused to the wilderness, the young man had no difficulty in discerning it.

A balmy breeze cooled the fevered temples of the wanderer; and, as he looked upon the inspiring scene of mountains, woods, and streams, sweet memories of the happy days of sunlit childhood flitted athwart his mind They came like phantoms of pleasant dreams which too quickly vanish. But he strove to prolong their presence; and, while he luxuriated in the vision, consciousness of his present condition gradually faded away. Thus he was again completely a child of the wilderness, and oblivious of the flight of the passing hours, until the hooting of the owl and the darkness of the glades admonished him of the approach of night. His noble steed, too, had been reared among the Indians, and seemed to have an instinctive knowledge of the direction his rider wished to pursue; for Charles had long ceased to notice the ancient encampments, the intersecting paths and moss upon the northern side of the trees.

Charles was at no loss in the forest to provide for his comfort. With his tomahawk and knife the framework of his camp was soon completed. And, while his meat hung before the crackling fagots, he gathered rushes from the margin of the brook and elastic twigs from the pendant boughs, with which he prepared his couch.

While partaking of his frugal meal, the young man several times observed his horse lift up his head and look in the direction of the thicket already referred to. The animal, however, exhibited no signs of alarm, and always after gazing a moment, resumed his browsing.

Later in the night the moon arose in brilliancy, and her silvery rays glimmered tremblingly through the thick foliage slightly agitated by the gentle breeze. Spreading his blanket on the couch, and happening to cast

his eyes over a fallen trunk near which he was about to place his head, Charles beheld the face of Skippie.

For a brief interval he remained perfectly still and silent, for he had acquired the Indian habit of suppressing the symptoms of any sudden emotion.

"Why are you here, Skippie?" he demanded.

"He did not say no," was the answer.

"My father?"

To this Skippie nodded affirmatively.

"And you asked his permission?"

Again there was an affirmative nod.

"Then come in and eat; and afterward lie down and sleep."

Skippie did his bidding in silence. This youth—or rather dwarf, for the wrinkles on his forehead indicated that he had long since passed the age of adolescence—was one of the clan Cameron, and had joined his exiled laird in Canada, and acted in the capacity of page to his mistress until her death. Afterward he became a constant attendant on the exile, and Charles was aware that he had been of great service to his father in procuring news from certain points, (for, although exceedingly small, he was very active, and seemed insensible to fatigue,) and in warning him of approaching danger on several momentous occasions. And not the least valuable of his qualifications as a runner—a term familiar in the Indian country—was his uniform taciturnity. He heard everything; but nothing was ever learned from him by any but his chief or trusted persons of his household.

Towards morning Charles awoke and rekindled the fire, but did not lie down again. After partaking of a hearty meal, the travellers pursued their journey toward the boundary-line of the State of New York, and passed it in the forenoon. Then, turning to the left, they followed the old war-path in the direction of the lakes which ran near the north-eastern corner of Pennsylvania.

When the sun was midway in the heavens, Charles faintly heard a hallooing, and, as the sound appeared to be in the direction he was pursuing, his pace was quickened. The cry seemed to proceed from one in distress, and Charles knew it was not an Indian.

Presently he detected the recent footmarks of a man in a path that crossed the one he was following; and, as the halloo was still heard at intervals on the right, he dismounted, and, throwing the reins to Skippie, proceeded cautiously in that direction. The path, which followed the course of one of the small tributaries of the Delaware, soon emerged from the dense thicket of bushes and entered the dark woods. And here an unexpected scene awaited the young adventurer. On his right, and but a few paces distant, in the forks of a chestnut-tree, was a large panther, in the act of springing upon him.

The practised eye and steady hand of Charles sufficed for the emergency. Almost as instantaneously as thought, the report of his rifle rang through the woods, and the panther lay struggling in its death-throes at his feet. And even then the animal might have inflicted a serious wound had he not been despatched by the dirk of Skippie, who bounded forward and stabbed him in the heart in the midst of his convulsive flounderings.

"Done that before!" said he; meaning that he had stabbed other panthers and escaped their claws.

"But it was not the voice of a panther we heard, Skippie," said Charles.

"No!" said a stranger; "but verily the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

"Ha!" said Charles, descrying the form of a man in the same tree the panther had occupied, but upon a perpendicular branch some twenty feet above the forks, which he seemed to be hugging with desperate tenacity.

"How did you get up there?" asked Charles, seeing the limb, which was without lateral shoots, swaying backward and forward under its heavy burden.

"My son," said the stranger, who was a man of large dimensions, "I am uncomfortable here. Let me first contrive to get down, and then I will speak of the manner of my getting up."

"Slide down, sir," said Charles.

"You are sure he's dead?"

"Quite," replied Charles, lifting up one of the feet of the animal and displaying its enormous but harmless claws.

"That was not a pleasant descent," said the stranger, after descending more rapidly than he desired, and being slightly stunned by his collision with the earth; "but," he added "it is the mode of the bear, and they say I am as hardy as one, if not as rough, sometimes."

"Now will you tell me how one of your bulk and weight could ascend such a pole as that?"

"God aided me, and all things are possible with him. I know not the manner of it, my friend. I do not recollect climbing up there, but I suppose I must have done so. I remember being pursued by the animal, and mounting to the forks when she was at my heels. Many a panther have I seen in these wild woods, but never have I been pursued before. Yet it was my own fault or imprudence; I killed her young one on the wayside, not supposing its mother to be within hearing."

"The mother is never out of hearing," said Charles, "when her young are basking in the sunshine. But who are you? Let me see—the Rev. David Jones! I am glad to meet you, sir."

"And you have my solemn assurance, my friend, that I reciprocate the gladness, although I do not recognise your face."

Charles easily brought the eccentric missionary to remember the young white man who lived so long with the Indians; and Mr Jones proposing to accompany him to the village where he expected to meet his Indian friends, they at once prepared to resume their journey. The Rev. Mr Jones, at Charles's urgent solicitation, mounted his horse; while the agile young man, having had a taste of his old sport, and finding his appetite still unsatisfied, proposed making a short hunt through the wood for a fawn, or a fat young buck, which might be eaten at that season. And he strode away to gratify his inclination, promising to meet his companions at a noted spring about a mile distant.

Finding that Skippie would not converse with him, Mr Jones commenced singing one of his favourite psalms; and continued to sing without interruption until startled by a frightened gobbler that flapped up from the whortle-berry bushes near the path. It alighted on one of the lower branches of a spreading oak, and, with its long neck stretched out, seemed desirous of listening to the spiritual song, so different from

the sounds usually heard in the forest. But Mr Jones was preparing to regale him with a sound more familiar to his ears. He had drawn forth a pistol from beneath his black buckskin coat, and was taking a steady aim, when the turkey fell headlong to the earth, his neck almost severed by the rifle-ball of Charles, who had approached Mr Jones to request him to cease singing, as it frightened the deer.

As the shades of evening descended, the party encamped near the bank of the Delaware, on a level piece of ground, where a small rivulet flowed through a cleft in the hills toward the river. Here the turkey was dressed and cooked by Skippie, while Charles stretched and dried his panther-skins.

At supper a most ravenous appetite seemed to have seized upon them all, and the two youngest could not avoid evincing some anxiety for the termination of Jones' lengthy prayer.

In the course of ten minutes after the "Amen" had been pronounced, all that remained of the gobbler were his bones, his tail, and his toe-nails.

In the night, when the blazing fire made the scene cheerful, and when all were in a comfortable condition after their hearty meal, they were startled by the loud snorting of the horse as he ran toward the camp.

The object causing the alarm was evidently between the camp and the river; and perhaps an enemy might be crouching behind the slight embankment, not twenty paces distant, taking a deadly aim at the hitherto unconscious travellers.

Charles turned his face in the direction of the intruder, so unerringly indicated by the horse, and gazed steadfastly, while Skippie prostrated himself and applied his ear to the ground.

"I see!" whispered Charles, raising his rifle noiselessly. "It is an Indian."

"One!" said Skippie, and unsheathing his dirk.

"And we are three," said Mr Jones, "but do not be the first to fire · he may be a friend."

"I am only in readiness," said Charles, endeavouring to fix his aim. "If he raises his gun, then I will be justified in pulling trigger."

But he did not raise his gun. On the contrary, his head, scalp-lock and all, sank down and vanished behind the slight embankment and the next moment his voice was heard, saying, in very good English—

"Don't shoot! I'm a friend."

"What friend?" asked Mr Jones, in his full loud voice, rendered strong by much preaching. "What nation, if you are an Indian?"

"I'm a white man," said the stranger.

"He is, at least, in Indian costume, like myself," said Charles.

"Yes, but I'm white though," said the stranger, hearing the last speech, and now approaching boldly. "And you see I haven't got a gun. So there's no danger."

"Do you call yourself a white man, my friend?" asked the preacher, staring like the rest at the curious aspect of the stranger, who was one of those short fat men we sometimes see who have no necks, their heads growing out between their shoulders. He wore leggings, hunting-shirt, and blanket; his head had been shaved, the scalp-lock alone remaining; and his face, plump and round, with a scarcely-discernible point of a

nose, had been fantastically painted—one side being red, with sundry black spots interspersed, and the other altogether black.

"Yes, I'm a white man," said he, "like two of you; but I've been living with the savages, and they painted me. I thought once or twice when I stooped down to drink that my face looked black. Is it very dark?"

"Black, my friend," said Mr Jones, "on one side."

"I thought they were making sport of me!"

"Who are you? your name?" demanded Charles.

"I've a famous big name! One of their greatest chiefs is called Cornplanter, or Cornstalk—I disremember which; and so they called me Popcorn."

"What was your name before you lived among the Indians?" asked Mr Jones, seeing Charles's diversion.

"Oh, I'm Peter Shaver, among the whites."

"True!" said Charles. "I thought I knew your voice, Peter; but they have so disguised you that your own mother wouldn't recognise you. Here, look in this small mirror."

Peter looked and stood aghast, while the rest could not refrain from hearty laughter.

"I'll take his scalp for it!" cried he. "I'll be revenged, if I have to lose my life! The tarnationed, rascally savage! If I ever meet him—and I've a notion to go back—I'll have his scalp or his scalp-lock! And if I can't find him, I'll give some other red devil a terrible thrashing!"

"Suppose you begin with me," said Charles.

"I don't care!" said the indignant Peter. "If these gentlemen will see fair play, and you won't use anything but your fists—"

"Stranger," said Mr Jones, rising to his feet and placing his hand on Popcorn's shoulder, "if you are a friend, and come in peace, sit down and eat such as we can spare you, or else depart. This is our camp, and you are our guest; but you will be thrust out if you do not behave yourself. Know that Charles Cameron is no blackguard, to fight with his fists like the degraded bullies of the ring."

"Charles Cameron! It is, by jingo! Oh, I beg your pardon a million times! And you are no Indian, no more nor me! Don't you know me?—Peter Shaver?"

"I know you very well, Peter, and have been merely jesting, when perhaps I should have been very serious. Sit down and eat. You are too late for the turkey, but the jerked beef may suffice. Eat and smoke, and then tell us your adventures;—why you left your employer's service, and how you came to be dwelling among the Indians?"

Peter, having a most voracious appetite, as he had a most capacious stomach, without further parley assailed the viands set before him.

When he had finished his meal he related his story substantially as follows. On the day he set out from Mr Schooley's house to visit the mill he was seized by two Indians. They threatened to tomahawk him if he made any resistance or attempted to escape. He was compelled to dismount. One of them led the way on foot, while the other followed on his iron-gray pony. When any one approached they plunged into the inaccessible recesses of the forest, and remained silent and still until the way was clear, and then ventured forth again, avoiding the most

frequented paths. When encamped for the night, Peter was permitted to recline before the fire in dignified silence, while the Indians prepared his food and filled his pipe, and manifested other indications of a high appreciation of his importance. On the evening of the second day they dressed him in Indian fashion, shaving his head and painting him.

After several days of moderate travel, during which the Indians seemed to be mindful of the comfort of their captive, they arrived in the vicinity of Lake Cayuga. Here they were met by many people of the Mohawk and Oneida tribes. But most conspicuous among them were two squaws, one of middle age and the other quite young, and both, as Peter declared, very beautiful, with the exception of their pink skins. They came running toward him with their arms extended; and, Peter said, he also opened his. But they stopped abruptly when within a few paces of him, and, very impolitely turning up their noses, likewise turned up their heels and walked away. They hung down their heads, as if ashamed of something, or disappointed in the man they had sent for.

A few moments after, and while hundreds were standing round, a chief stepped forward and made a fierce speech to Peter's captors, who stood in silent shame. Then such shouts were heard as never assailed his ears before. They were shouts of laughter, loud and prolonged. After which the chief, who had scolded his captors, approached Peter, and informed him, in very good English, that the stupid Minisinks had brought them the wrong man. But Peter's joy on hearing this was dashed a little when told that he had better return immediately, or the enraged Indians might do him an injury. Peter's experience among the Indians, however, had hitherto been so agreeable that he could not be apprehensive of a change of treatment, and so wandered forward into the village in quest of something to eat. The eldest of the women whom he had seen sent him victuals, with a message to depart. He lingered, nevertheless, while occasional bursts of merriment still assailed his ears.

Finally, the chief seized him by the ear and led him out of the village pointing to where the pony had been left, and shoving the indignant captive in that direction. But Peter's pony had been taken, and in its place was a jackass of similar colour, but whose sides had been variegated by the brush of a savage artist; and the sullen animal now resembled the zebra,—a beast he had once seen at a show. They told Peter his pony had been "swapped" for the jackass, and that he must mount and ride away; and, after a moment's reflection, and concluding it might be a very good swap, and an acquisition in the Jenny Jump settlement, he leaped upon the beast. Then Popcorn, as they called him, was cheered by the multitude; and the ass, either guided by the thong or frightened by the deafening sounds, turned his head in a south-eastern direction and trotted off, braying so loudly that all other noises were utterly obliterated.

"They had put some corn-cakes and dried meat in my bag," said Peter, "and swapped for my corn as well as my pony. But the consumed jackass kept trying to bite me, and every now and then roared like a lion. It took me two whole days to learn how to manage him. I found out I could only do it by knocking him down with a club. Then he was always gentle enough till next morning. But I lost the

right path, and travelled in several wrong ones. And I can't tell how I got here at all, unless the jack came of his own accord and was raised by the whites. And now, gentlemen," continued he, "as I understand you are going to come back soon from the Indian country, I would be glad to travel with you, as I know I shall never find the way home by myself, and I want to whip the Indian who painted me."

Charles remained silent in troubled meditation. It was not to be doubted that Peter had been captured by the stupid messengers in the belief that it was himself. They had evidently seen him ride away from the house of Mr Schooley, and, being strangers to the person of the one they had been employed to seize, the mistake had been committed. The kind treatment on the way, the assembling of the tribe,—among whom he had many acquaintances—and the eagerness of the two women to meet him, who must have been gentle Moonlight and Brown Thrush, rendered what was merely a conjecture as Peter proceeded with his story a certainty at its conclusion.

Without deciding whether Peter should accompany them back into the Indian country or continue his solitary journey, preparations were made for sleeping, by enlarging the shelter and widening the couch.

The next morning it was left optional with Peter whether to return with the travellers to the Indian country or to pursue his solitary way across the Blue Mountain to the white settlements. He chose the former, repeating his determination to whip the two Minisink Indians who had captured and painted him.

Nothing further worthy of special notice occurred until the party arrived in the vicinity of the southern extremity of Lake Cayuga. They were approaching the village where the foster-mother of Charles often spent the summer, and in the neighbourhood of which she held a large tract of rich land inherited from her mother.

Charles paused, and, placing his hand over his mouth, uttered the loud halloo he had so often sounded in his youth when returning from distant expeditions with the sons of the chiefs and sachems. Soon there was a reply which produced an animated expression of pleasure on his handsome features; and, as they drew nearer the village, numbers of men were seen running toward them through the beautiful grove in which the town was situated.

The foremost of those who came out to receive the adopted son of Gentle Moonlight was Calvin, the young Delaware chief who had been educated with Charles at College. They embraced and shed tears of joy, for they had always been very intimate friends.

"They had concluded you would not come," said Calvin.

"And then they sent the Minisinks to seize me; did they not?" demanded Charles.

"I think so," said the other; "but they do not confess it. Ha! I see you have Popcorn with you!"

"Yes, I'm back agin," said Peter; "and when I set eyes on those nasty Minisinks there'll be a fight."

"Let me advise you to be peaceable," said the other. "You may get into danger."

Peter, struck by his manner, remained silent. The Rev. Mr Jones was surrounded and welcomed by many of his Indian acquaintances as they approached the town

Very soon the news of the voluntary return of the White Eagle spread through the village; and, when led by his friends to one of the principal wigwams, he was clasped in the arms of his foster-mother, who held him long in silence, while the Brown Thrush, smiling and weeping alternately, sang one of the wild songs Charles had so often listened to with delight.

"My sister," said Charles, when released from the embrace of his mother, and at the same time kissing her tearful cheek, "thou hast not forgotten the words of thy brother when we parted many moons ago. It is the song you promised to sing when he returned. And didst thou never forget thy brother?"

"How could I?" said she. "The ripples murmured in the bright sunlight, as they did when we played together on the margin of the merry brook, and the soft sound was like the low voice of my brother. The bright stars danced in gentle glimmers, as they had done when we wandered together in the silent night. The fawn you gave me followed my lonely steps and bleated for thee. The wild roses blossomed, and withered, and fell, because thou wert away. And, oh, my brother, the Thrush was drooping her head, and would have died, if thou hadst remained with the Antelope! And thou dost ask if I did not sometimes forget my brother? How could I?"

"Thou could'st not—not I thee, my sister! In my dreams we met again in the solitude of the great forest, where the birds sang in safety and no rude foot crushed the violets. We sat beneath the lofty arch of the giant trees, and the sparkling waters murmured their low melody at our feet. Ha-wen-no-yu, the great Father of all good spirits, looked down from the blue sky and smiled upon us. And he heard the prayer we uttered:—that, after age had crept over us and we had closed our eyes upon the scenes of this world, we might meet again in the great hunting-grounds, and still wander together as loving sister and brother."

"And what did he speak?"

"He seemed to smile upon my request."

"Then, oh, Kacha Manito, I pray thee bring age upon us soon, so that we may close our eyes and depart for that happy land! My brother, thy sister too has dreamed. She thought thou were separated from her by a great chasm, over which neither of us could pass. And when you attempted to leap over, the Antelope ran before you; and when I strove to come to thee, she frowned and bade me remain; so there was no more happiness in this life, and I prayed the good Kacha Manito to remove us both to that happy land!"

"But these were merely dreams, my sister, and we should not be troubled by them. You see I can come to thee, and thou canst come to me. The Antelope will smile when she beholds you, and beckon you over the chasm. And thou must smile, too. The Thrush will love the Antelope; and soon, when I return to my father, both you and my mother must go with me."

"My son," said his foster-mother, after a short silence, during which the musing maiden made no reply, "the warriors of the nations are assembling at the Great Island, between the broad lakes, (Ontario and Erie,) where the council-fire is burning. From the shores of the salt water, where the sun rises from the blue deep, to the rolling prairies, where it sets, the chiefs are coming. They are digging up their toma-

hawks and sharpening their arrows for war. It was for this reason I sent thee word to come. I longed to behold thee once more. And I desired that thy voice might be heard in the council. Thou art my representative, and they will listen to thy words. I will go with thee, and the sweet Thrush shall sing the song of peace on the way; and when we see the smoke of the council-fire ascending, it may charm the ear of the fierce Thayendanegea, thy brother and her brother. And then, if the hatchet be buried again, we will go with thee to thy white-haired father, and behold the beautiful eyes of the Antelope."

"My mother," said Charles, "your words sound like music in my ear, and I will obey thee."

Then, while a sumptuous repast was in preparation, Charles regarded his Indian mother and sister in silent admiration. They were fairer than most of the families of the Iroquois, and, unlike the majority of them, had oval faces and regular features of delicacy and beauty.

Bartholomew Calvin, the young Delaware chief, who sat beside Charles, had lingered among the lakes much longer than had been anticipated; and the Thrush was the magnet which attracted him. Charles could not avoid perceiving it, and he knew not whether to be angry or pleased with his friend for presuming to love his sister. But there were no indications of his passion being reciprocated; and it was not to be supposed that either Gentle Moonlight or the passionate Brandt would promote the alliance, unless the "Tamed Terrapin," as they called him, or the degenerate son of the Algonquins, would throw away his Christianity or his civilization and take up his abode among them in the forest.

CHAPTER VII.

THE next day they set out for the Great Council-Fire, between the broad lakes.

The cavalcade (all now being mounted) consisted of some twenty warriors, with their sisters and mothers,—the latter always having a voice in the ratification of treaties; and it was understood that, as usual, the pale-faces would strive to negotiate for more of their land. They had been preceded the day before by a very large delegation of Senecas, who were, with the exception of Red Jacket, (whose father was a Cayuga) in favour of war—war against the Colonies.

The Rev. Mr Jones gladly availed himself of this opportunity of meeting the representatives of so many tribes. And Peter Shaver, having not yet succeeded in finding his enemies, vowed his purpose to look for them around the Great Council-Fire, and to chastise them wherever he might see them. The young Delaware chief, melancholy and sighing, followed in silence.

Our party were welcomed to the Great Council by Brandt himself; and a vast number of Charles's old playmates, now chiefs and warriors, crowded round him and renewed their professions of friendship and attachment.

But Charles perceived with regret that the greater number of white men mingling with the Indians were British agents. Sir John Johnston,

John Butler and his son Walter, Girty, and Mackee, as well as the implacable Queen Esther, were there.

The chiefs were the first to speak. White Eyes, an aged chief of the Western Delawares, had the precedence and he was in favour of peace and alliance with the Americans; but Captain Pipe, another chief of the same band, declared for the British.

The chiefs of the Five Nations permitted the chiefs of other tribes to be heard first, because they had come a great distance to meet them there; and when the representatives of the various Western tribes had uttered their sentiments, Thayendanegea rose and spoke in favour of war—war against the Americans.

Charles was then permitted by the aged chiefs, as a special act of courtesy, to follow his foster-brother.

He said he could not agree with his brother. The Americans were not to be dreaded so much as the British. The oppression came from the government beyond the ocean; and, if they oppressed their own people, how could it be supposed they would spare the Indians! He was in favour of a strict neutrality, unless the Indians should be unanimously inclined to join the Colonies—a thing he did not look for.

Sir John Johnston ridiculed the idea of permitting boys to speak in council, but admitted that the mother of Charles had a right to send him there. He controverted what had been said with indignant warmth.

After a very animated debate, they arrived at no other definite result than an agreement of those favourable to the British to meet again at Oswego.

Then a general dispersion took place, and our party prepared to return to the village they had set out from, near the head-waters of the Susquehanna.

The friendly Shawnees, Delawares, Cherokees, and Oneidas, were encamped on the same ground; while the tribes committed to the British cause kept aloof, and regarded them with looks of anger and aversion. The two missionaries, and the foster-mother and sister of Charles as well as himself and the redoubtable "Popcorn," were in the midst of the former.

In the evening Brandt came alone to the tent of his aunt, and sat down in gloomy silence between Charles and his sister.

"Oh, my brother," said his sister, "do not go with them to Oswego. Come with us to the peaceful vale where the south winds are sighing sweetly through the quivering leaves."

"No, sister," said he, sadly. "The war-whoop is heard on the shores of the northern lake. The war-paths are open. The tomahawks have been dug up. Thy red brother must lead the van of the battle. He must not kill his white brother."

"No!" cried the Thrush. "He would not do it if he met him in battle!"

"But Thayendanegea's people might kill him. The White Eagle must remain with his brother."

"The White Eagle is free," said Charles, "and may soar whithersoever he chooses."

"No!" said Brandt.

"What does my brother mean?"

"The White Eagle must not be pierced by the arrows of his red

brother. He must not, then, stand before the bow. He must remain with his sister, among the women, if he will not fight the American pale-faces. Then the White Eagle must have some other name. He will no longer be a chief. They will call him the Frightened Hare!"

"Never!" said Charles. "I will lead my white people against the British. Let my red brother keep from before our rifles!"

"The Thrush will go with the White Eagle," said the maiden, "and sing him to sleep, so that he shall not harm his red brother."

"The Brown Thrush must go with Thayendanegea," said the chief.

"No!" said his aunt, speaking for the first time, although she had been an attentive listener. "My sister's daughter now has no mother but me. My sister is dead. My sister's son, listen to my command. The Thrush shall not go with you."

"My mother's sister, my ears are open. What you have said has entered them, and you must be obeyed."

"My sister's son," she continued, with deliberation, "the Brown Thrush shall go with the White Eagle."

"You command it. It must be so. But whither will they go? You cannot command the three thousand warriors whose chiefs have decided that my white brother shall not return to the pale-faces until the war is ended."

"False, treacherous, perfidious Thayendanegea!" said Charles. "And this is the cowardly work of the one I have loved and trusted! No more my brother! Henceforth we are foes!"

"My brother, do not make my blood boil over. Another had died ere the speech were finished. Thayendanegea did nothing. He knew it not until the chiefs had decided. He did not approve it, but he could not oppose it. He loves his brother still. He waits to hear his brother's next words."

"Forgive me, my brother!" said Charles with tears in his eyes. "I ask my brother's pardon."

"It was the Malcha Manito, and not my brother. But what can my brother do? The warriors surrounding him, who will not declare war against his white brothers, will not oppose the decree of the chiefs. They are not ready to fight their red brothers."

"I will escape. You know the White Eagle can soar above his enemies."

"But whither will he direct his flight? He will not find the Antelope in the peaceful vale."

"My brother speaks no fables," said Charles, pale and deeply moved.

"No. Thayendanegea cannot say what is not true. His brother's white sister has been, ere this, conveyed away. It was the decree of the chiefs, solicited by the Queen of the Senecas; but she cannot be injured. You are unhappy?"

"Oh," cried the Indian maiden, "let her be brought hither, or go where we go, and I will kiss away her tears and sing her to sleep!"

"Sister's son," said the aunt, "let it be so."

"It will be so," he replied. "Such is the purpose of the one who decided everything, and whose decision was merely ratified by the chiefs."

"And that was old Esther," said Charles.

"Queen Esther," said Brandt.

"My brother," said the Delaware chief Calvin, who had hitherto remained a silent listener, addressing Charles, "I will remain with you, or we will go together, whithersoever the great Ha-wen-no-yu, or our Holy Father, may direct our steps."

"Farewell!" said Brandt, rising. "The maple-leaf is red. It has been painted by the first frosts. Ere it falls we may meet again. Our lodges must be replenished with meat, and our women must gather the corn. Before the war-trail winds toward the sea we may hunt the buffalo in the West."

And he was gone before his mother's sister could interrogate him further. And not many minutes afterward the approach of Queen Esther was announced by fife and drum, which had been presented her by the British.

Queen Esther or Catherine Montour, decked in gaudy habiliments, entered, and sat in their midst, upon a large scarlet robe spread for her by one of the attendants.

"Ha, Gentle Moonlight," said she, with a sardonic smile, "there is a cloud upon thy face! Oh, yes! I did it; it was me. War, war to the hilt! My work. Blood must flow. Brandt shall be the Grand Sachem at Oswego. He shall be king; but he shall be the head-warrior, too. And why don't you *command* this young Eagle to marry the poor Thrush? and then we would make him a great Prince. Oh that he was a Seneca! I would *order* him to marry; and no one disobeys me. What! dost frown at me? Tut, boy! But you won't escape. I have too wise a head for that. You will not leave your darling Antelope? Oh, no! Well, then, you shan't. She will come to you. That was Queen Esther's wit! Adieu! Go peaceably and submissively to the West, on the Scioto, or cross over to the 'Dark and Bloody Ground,' as some call it—but it is neutral now,—and hunt the deer and buffalo. But do not destroy the Antelope!"

Without permitting any one to reply, she arose and departed, preceded by her martial music.

Shortly afterward, Charles was roused from his abstraction by the quiet entrance of Skippie, who stood before him and said—

"Going!"

"Going, Skippie?"

"I."

"I understand. Tell my father——"

"All. Knew all."

And before Charles could utter another word Skippie was gone.

Shortly after this, Charles was again startled by a tremendous uproar among the boys. It appeared that, in imitation of their fathers, they had been holding a council. They had their interpreter, who rendered everything in plain English to Peter Shaver, who was present. Very soon Peter was informed that he had been elected king. And, upon desiring to know where his subjects were to be found, they informed him that he should be ruler over the Capitanasses. There had been a tribe of that name in Jersey, although he was not aware of it. Peter, therefore, supposing he had been made the laughing-stock of the boys, being called King of the Capitanasses because he rode an ass, indignantly withdrew. They followed, whooping and crying, "Popcorn, King of the Capitanasses!" The men laughed heartily as Peter strode

over the ground toward the camp of Gentle Moonlight. And, as he approached, he espied the Minisink Indian who had put the dark stains on his face, and which no process of washing or rubbing he could employ had yet removed. Finding the Indian merry at his expense, he threw aside his blanket and charged upon him with his fists. Now, although Peter was short and fat, and rather short-winded, he was somewhat scientific in the use of his fists. A ring was instantly formed around the combatants, with shouts and cries of merriment. The Minisink strove in vain to get the "Indian hug" on Peter. Peter planted his blows with such precision and rapidity, that his adversary was forced back, and, as he retreated, dodging from one side to another, Peter was applauded by the spectators. Finally, Peter succeeded in planting a blow on the stomach of the Indian, which laid him on the ground, and then the victor would have been content to drop the quarrel. Not so the Indian. Incensed and suffering, he drew his knife and made several desperate lunges, which were warded off with difficulty. The spectators interfered, and disarmed the Indian, who threatened to be revenged on some future occasion, while the boys conducted their new chief and champion in triumph to his tent.

But the bruised Minisink soon found sympathizers; and as the British agents, under the guise of pedlars, had distributed no small quantity of rum among the men, there soon arose a cry for the scalps of the American pale-faces. When this reached the ears of the foster-mother of Charles, she had her tent removed to a place of greater security, where it was surrounded and guarded by a number of Delaware warriors; and early in the morning our party set out, in a southern direction, toward the head-waters of the Alleghany.

The weather was fine, and the journey, although easy and pleasant, (for the foster-mother of Charles was rich, and had been lavish in expenditure when providing for the comfort of her children), was devoid of special incident until the party crossed the dividing-line between New York and Pennsylvania. Here they rested while canoes were sought in which to descend the Alleghany River; and here they were informed by a runner of the approach of Julia, guarded by two Mingo chiefs, who could speak the English language, and who had been charged, as the runner assured Charles, to provide for all her wants, and to prevent her from suffering the slightest bodily inconvenience on the journey. Runners likewise came from Oswego, confirming the rumour that Brandt had been made grand-sachem of the Five Nations. It was also understood that the Indians would not go upon the war-path until the next spring; and in the meantime they were to disperse in hunting-parties, and secure a large supply of buffalo-meat.

The camp of the travellers, or captives, (for it appeared they were still subject to the direction of Queen Esther,) was situated in one of the wildest, and at the same time, one of the most lovely and romantic spots of nature. It was on a small delta of the Alleghany. The bright water flowed at their feet on the south, and upon its surface the golden beams of the sun danced in ever-varying splendour. Behind, they were defended from the chilling winds of the north by a high mountain, whose sides were clothed with evergreens.

Charles and Bartholomew Calvin explored the mountains and streams in the vicinity, and admired the bold features of the country. And it

was during one of these excursions with gun and angling-rod, that Calvin confessed—what Charles had already suspected—his passion for the sister of Brandt; and at the same time expressed the sad conviction—which was evident to all—that the Thrush was deeply in love with the Eagle. Charles said every thing in his power to encourage and comfort his friend, assuring him that, whatever might be his affection for his foster-sister, or her attachment to him, they could never be united.

Meanwhile, the poor Thrush and her aunt devoted themselves to the task of providing for the comfort of the captive maiden, whose arrival was now daily looked for. She was the Antelope, loved by Charles, whom they loved, and therefore they must love her too. The jealousy and hatred that might have poisoned more civilized women under similar circumstances found no place in their bosoms. It is true according to their code of morals, a chief might have more than one wife; but they were not ignorant that Charles, during the process of his education, had adopted the Christian faith, and would be governed by the laws of the race from which he was descended. And, likewise, Mr Jones had made some progress in their own conversion to Christianity. Nevertheless, the devoted Thrush sang joyously as she prepared soft furs and fashioned robes of fine cloth and hoods and moccasins for the Antelope.

It was while thus engaged in the deep solitude of the silent grove that Charles once encountered her. He had left Calvin and Peter fishing up the stream, near the camp of the seven guards of Queen Esther.

"My sister," said he, sitting down at her side on the bleached trunk of a fallen tree, then chequered by the straggling rays of the morning sun, "you will be kind to your white sister, will you not?"

"My brother loves his white sister. I love my brother."

"But will the Thrush always love the Antelope when she sees her brother gather the sweetest flowers for her nosegays?"

"Why not? Cannot my brother love us both? And why should we not love one another?"

"I fear, my poor sister, that you are incapable of comprehending me."

"Oh, never fear. My brother Thayendanegea used to say the White Eagle would forget his wild Thrush and remain away. But it was not so. I did not believe it. And did he not return? He used to tell her, also, that her white brother would love his white Antelope and forsake the Thrush. I did not believe that either. He was mistaken in the one, and will be in the other."

"But, my sister, suppose it had been as Brandt said?"

"The Thrush would still have sung. She would never have blamed and hated the Eagle. But it would have been a mournful song,—her own death-song. She would have folded her wings and died."

"Do you not know, my sister, that among the whites it is unlawful for a man to love two maidens at the same time?"

"Oh, yes! Mr Jones has told me. That is among courts and cities, and where the country is torn by the iron ploughs. I do not doubt it. But we will not go thither. The Antelope will remain with us in the warm sunlight, near the edge of the bright leaping waters at the foot of the mountain. She will see the antlered buck followed by two does,

and the birds of the fairest plumage attended by two mates. She will forget the people and their cruel customs."

Charles despaired of convincing her of the superiority of the customs of the white people; and, after a protracted silence on his part, while the Indian maiden resumed her song and plied her delicate fingers in the fabrication of an exquisitely ornamented pair of moccasins for Julia, he resumed:—

"But, my sister, hast thou not seen thy brother's friend, the young Delaware chief, was fascinated by the song of the Thrush?"

"He would not wrong his friend. He would rather perish."

"I know it. But I would not have him die. I love him too. We were brothers at the college."

"And did he not hear thee speak of me? Did he not know thy sister loved thee? Let him return to his people in the East, or wed among the Delawares of the West. The Brown Thrush knows her mate!"

"My sister," continued Charles, "I say these things to thee that thou mayest be prepared for the events of the future. Once I loved thee only, and I love thee yet. But I could not avoid loving the Antelope of my own race, when she was so kind to me. What thy brother says is the truth. A Christian is not allowed to have two wives. And the Antelope is a Christian. Her husband must have but one wife!"

"Be it so!" said the maiden, lifting her confiding eyes to those of the young man. "We will not marry. We will build no nests. The Antelope and the Thrush will only love and charm the White Eagle. And when we go to the great hunting-grounds together, Ha-wen-no-yu may not have such bad laws as the white men."

Charles, half amused and half vexed at the argument of the child of nature, ceased the discussion, and they returned together to the camp.

At the first wail of the whippoorwill perched on the trunk of the fallen tree where the Indian maiden sang in the daytime, and just when the last glimmer of twilight was succeeded by the silvery rays of the rising moon, our temporary sojourners at the foot of the mountain were startled by the hailing halloo of an Indian, which they immediately understood to be the announcement of the approach of Julia, the captive maiden.

The only direction by which horses could approach the small area in the midst of which stood the encampment was by following the course of the river, along the right bank of which was an old Indian path. Up this path Charles and the Indian maiden ran, hand-in-hand, to meet the captive; and when they turned an acute point of one of the ridges, round which wound the path, meandering with the stream, they beheld the object of their solicitude. Rushing forward, Charles clasped his affianced in his arms, and, when relinquished by him, she was as heartily embraced by the Indian maiden.

Silence prevailed for many moments, during which their tears could nor be restrained. But their throbbing hearts were relieved.

"Oh, Julia," said Charles, "I did not think, when we parted, we should meet again in such a place as this! I, too, am a prisoner. They detained me in hopes that I would unite with them in the war against the colonists. And they brought thee hither to remove one of the motives I might have to escape. I fear you have suffered very much!"

"Indeed, I have not!" replied Julia, with a slight smile and a blush. "It has been like a dream—a repetition in my slumbers of some of the fireside stories I have listened to of long winter evenings. The two chiefs who captured me could speak our language very well, and provided every convenience for me in their power. Their first care was to assure me I should sustain no injury; their next, that I should meet with thee. After that, all was pleasing novelty and romantic adventure."

"Her voice is like the warbling of the robin or the sound of dancing waters," said the Indian girl; and Charles rendered it into English.

"How beautiful!" said Julia, gazing at the face of the child of the forest.

"Let us now hasten to the tent of my Indian mother," said Charles, leading the way. "But who is that?" he continued, seeing a white man following, the two chiefs having halted with Queen Esther's guard.

"That is our gardener, Paddy Pence," said Julia. "You may come now, Paddy," she continued.

Paddy ran forward and prostrated himself before Charles, whom he had not recognised; for Julia, with maiden modesty, not wishing him to hear that which might be uttered on her meeting with her lover, had directed him to remain some distance behind.

"Oh, Misther Indian chafe," cried he, "if you have kilt Mr Charles, do please send me and Miss Julia back to the Jenny Jump, and Mr Schooley will pay you a thousand pounds; I know he will, for he said he would!"

"When did he say that, Paddy?" asked Julia.

"I mane I know he would naturally say sich a thing afther he found out we had both been captivated!"

"Paddy!" said Charles.

"You know me name, Misther Indian; and I hope you don't mane to take the sculp of a frind."

"Paddy, don't you know me?"

"Are you one of the great and noble and ginerous chafes who used to ate and smoke at Misther Schooley's table? I thought I knew yer voice. And do you know I always thought you the handsomest one of them all?"

"Be done, now, Paddy; none of your nonsense, or by the patron saint of all the Paddies of ould Ireland———"

"Wha! I know you now, Mr Charles, by your poor brogue!" cried Paddy, leaping up. "And, as sure as the moon is shining over us, I had forgotten your hunting-shirt, and leggins, and breech-clout, on the day you left us. And here I've been mistaking you for one of them blackguard savages!"

"Paddy," said Julia, as they moved slowly toward the fire at the hut, "you must not abuse the Indians. If Charles is not one this lady is."

"I beg your pardon, miss," said he, addressing the Thrush; "it was only an Irish slape o' the tongue."

After interrupting the speech, Charles informed Paddy that the Indian lady did not understand English.

"Then, be the powers," said Paddy, "she wouldn't be likely to sculp me for me Irish."

They were met at the threshold of the encampment by the foster-mother of Charles, who tenderly folded Julia in her arms, and placed her on the seat of furs which had been provided for her. She gazed long in admiration of the features and form of the white maiden; and then, turning to Charles, said she was very lovely, but that he must not permit her to estrange him from his forest sister.

Every delicacy the camp afforded was produced for the captives; and Paddy had just a sufficient recollection of his position and his duty to forbear the gratification of his ravenous appetite until his mistress bade him eat.

The Rev. Mr Jones, who had been making the woods vocal with his spiritual songs, came in and shared the smiles of Julia. Calvin, too, paid his devoirs in his usual melancholy way.

During the evening, Julia, declaring she felt no fatigue, as her progress through the wilderness had been by easy though tortuous marches, readily consented to narrate the manner of her capture.

"Every afternoon," said she, "since the forest-leaves have been variegated by the early frosts, it has been my habit to ride over the grounds we used to visit together. It was not considered prudent to walk alone in the paths, for a number of large rattlesnakes had been seen by Mr Green every year at that season; nor would my guardian permit me to go unattended. Richard, you know, could not spare the time to accompany me; and so Paddy, armed with the French fowling-piece given to Mr Schooley by Governor Franklin, followed my steps, and kept my erratic person in view, as much as I saw proper to permit him. But my chief reliance was on Solo, my poor, faithful companion.

"It was upon the gentle slope where Richard, you know, had girdled the noble forest-trees for the purpose of inclosing another field, that I paused and listened to the dirge-like sound of the breeze as it murmured through the boughs of the stricken oaks. And I sang a mournful ditty, —leaning on my elbow,—no doubt the picture of dejection,—and my sympathetic palfrey as motionless as a monument, I was startled by the sudden cry of poor Solo: and, turning, I saw him rolling in agony to the ground, transfixed by an arrow which had passed through the points of his shoulders. Paddy came running to me with great swiftness, but when he saw the arrow he fired his gun at random, and, without pausing to recharge it, threw it down and took to his heels. But he was instantly confronted in the path by one of the Mingo chiefs, who laughed very heartily at his panic-stricken face. He seized him and bound his hands.

"The other chief rose from the tall grass near my horse, and, taking the reins in his hand, assured me, in very good English, that it was not their intention to injure either of us, although we must submit to be their prisoners and promise not to utter any cries. He said he was employed to convey me to the West, where I should meet the White Eagle. That assurance, Charles, bereft me of half my terrors. And yet a painful thought flashed through my mind——"

"That I had, perhaps, resolved to become an Indian again, and might be violently tearing thee away from thy house," said Charles, smiling.

"Something of that nature, I admit," said Julia; "but it flitted away like the gleam of the lightning, and the Mingo assured me that you knew nothing of his proceeding. The object of his employer was to

prevent you from returning and bearing arms against your red brethren. Then I signified my readiness to accompany them, if they would also take my poor wounded Solo. This they could not agree to. But they assured me his wound would not prove fatal, though it had been their intention to kill him. They said the report of Paddy's gun would soon attract the people thither, and the dog would be taken care of. And so they hastened us away to the old sycamore, where their horses were concealed. Paddy was made to get up behind one of the chiefs, and then we plunged into hidden paths, whose existence I had no knowledge of before, and rode, I suppose, many miles without halting. They spread a shelter toward morning in a deep valley, and wrapped me in furs, so that neither the chill of the night-wind nor the dew of the leaves could reach me. I could not eat the food they offered; but I recollect seeing Paddy's jaws in motion. I fell asleep and dreamed of thee, Charles, and the Indian maiden, and a scene like this.

"When daylight appeared we resumed the journey. Supposing they might be pursued, our captors frequently deviated from the usual paths, for the purpose of misleading those who might attempt to follow us.

"After the second day, the chiefs were less apprehensive of being overtaken. They now suffered poor Paddy to go unbound, but warned him not to attempt an escape. This he pledged himself not to do, assuring them, upon his honour, that, if liberated, he would not know which course to take, and would starve in the woods. In short, to their infinite amusement, he begged them not to leave him behind. They killed various birds and other tender game for me; and, my appetite returning, I could partake of them with a good relish.

"In this manner, the weather being very beautiful all the time, we completed our journey. Paddy and I were delivered into the hands of the seven warriors—Senecas, I think—encamped a few miles from this place up the stream. One of the party guided us hither, and uttered the halloo which apprised you of our approach. He then vanished, and I saw him no more."

Julia had just concluded her recital, when the listeners were startled by hearing shouts and the reports of several guns. Charles and Calvin sprang up and listened attentively.

"MacSwine!" said Charles. "It is the voice of MacSwine! Julia, your captors were pursued, and have been overtaken. My father permitted MacSwine to go upon the trail, and he is an experienced woodsman. Listen! Did you not hear that?" The Senecas cry, ONAH! It is for us to fly. We will not move! My mother, let Queen Esther's guards hide from the fatal aim of MacSwine. He is our friend, and will deliver us. We will remain!"

"My son," said the Gentle Moonlight, "there are more than a hundred Seneca warriors encamped behind us, and others are on the march. They have been sent to kill buffalo, and merely await our motions, for they have been charged to see that no one escapes before we reach Chilicothe. Such was the speech of a runner who passed this morning."

"Queen Esther," said Calvin, "cannot have given orders to restrain *my* actions. I will go to the Oneidas, and then to the beautiful band of Delawares remaining in their wigwams. I will return with as many as will accompany me, and we will defend the sister of Brandt's mother, and his own sister."

Calvin started away, and was soon lost to sight in the intricacies of the woods. Meantime an occasional shot was heard, followed by the yells of the savages, which seemed to grow fainter in the distance.

Charles went forth alone in the direction from which the yells at first proceeded, and sounded a horn his father had given him. It was replied to immediately by MacSwine, who was standing but a few hundred paces distant. The next moment the rescuing party advanced, and were soon greeted with the animated congratulations of Charles.

"Hoot, mon! Our blud's up! Where's the lassie?" said MacSwine.

"Safe, safe!" cried Charles. "She is yonder, where the fire is glimmering, in the camp of my foster-mother. And she is safe for the night. The Senecas, though wolves by day, do not often prowl in the night. Come and eat. And you are here, Will?" he continued, heartily welcoming Van Wiggens, and patting the head of his frisky, stump-tailed dog.

"Yes, tam dem!" said he. "Dey steal te goot and te peautiful Miss Lane, and leave te scolding Mrs Wan Viggens!"

Charles cordially grasped the hands of the rest of the party—some five or six in all—who had accompanied MacSwine.

But the Indians knew MacSwine's Scotch accent, and recollected his herculean frame, which years before, had been terribly familiar. Hence their flight before they knew exactly the numerical strength of the rescuers.

Charles led his friends into the tent of his Indian mother, where Julia gave utterance to the thanks she felt for the pursuit, and where the Indian maiden and her aunt had already prepared for them a plentiful repast.

They ate like half-starved wolves, having fasted for several days.

Peter Shaver, Paddy Pence, and Will Van Wiggens, surrounded by the three or four of the clan Cameron who had followed MacSwine, formed a separate group some paces apart, and entertained each other with the recital of their exploits.

"Now, Hugh," said Charles, when the last bone had been picked, "you will tell me the news of the valley, and first of my father."

The faithful Scot was in the midst of a recital, eagerly listened to both by Charles and Julia, when Mr Jones, suddenly returning from one of his solitary nocturnal rambles, during which he had been forgotten by the rest of the party, broke in on them with the cry, "Let us pray! I have heard the signals of the wolves of Queen Esther. They are rallying in the mountains, and after they have buried their dead they will come upon us with howls and gnashing teeth."

"You've got my French gun, Mr Van Wiggens," said Paddy, "and I can't fight."

"You shall have one of my pistols, Paddy," said Charles.

"And one of mine," said Mr Jones. "My voice will intimidate them more than my arms. But, alas! blood has been spilled. I heard their death-halloo."

"True, mon!" said Hugh, "we fired bock at 'em. And when Hugh MacSwine fires his rifle at mortal mon he becomes immortal."

"Let us pray, then!" repeated David Jones, falling down on his knees. The whole party, excepting the Presbyterians, followed his example; the Indian maiden and her aunt with as little hesitation as the rest.

The eccentric Baptist prayed that the party then kneeling in the solitude of the wilderness might be delivered from their enemies; and, next, that the Sons of Liberty, led into battle by George Washington, might triumph over the legions of the tyrant. He then admonished his hearers that to merit the aid of their Maker it was indispensable that they should be eager to help themselves, which was the best proof of their worthiness to be assisted.

After their defeat, the guard of Senecas bore their dead—two of their number having fallen—to a place of security, and buried them with all the ceremonies usual on such occasions. They then sent a runner to the large hunting-party of their nation encamped in the vicinity. Just before the messenger reached the encampment, Queen Esther arrived; and when the runner delivered his message, and made known the fact that two of the guard had fallen, an intense excitement ensued. Queen Esther, who had been accompanied by several of the principal chiefs recently returned from Oswego, immediately summoned a council of warriors, at which it was resolved to surround the camp on the Alleghany at early dawn, and demand the delivery of the offending whites into their hands. This project had the hearty approval of the Queen, and she anticipated with delight the torture she meant to inflict on her captives.

But Bartholomew Calvin had not been idle. He collected the party of Delawares who still acknowledged his authority, and also a number of Cherokees from the South, who were passing toward the neutral hunting-grounds beyond the Ohio. A small band of Shawnees, being assured they had no cause of complaint against the Colonists for the murder of Cornstalk at Fort Point Pleasant, as that deed had been done by the agents of Lord Dunmore, likewise consented to join him, but with no promise to make war against the Senecas. These, together with the seven Oneidas granted as a special protection to Gentle Moonlight and Brown Thrush, numbered altogether, including the party at the camp, some seventy men; and, apprehending an early assault, Calvin lost no time in leading his succours to the scene of action. They arrived late in the night, and, to avoid disturbing the slumber of our party, sought a few hours' repose under shelter of the surrounding trees.

As they had foreseen, the war-whoop of the Senecas rang down the valley of the Alleghany at early twilight. Charles and Calvin, and Hugh, followed by the rescuing party of Scots, rushed at once to the narrow pass above, which, if successfully defended, closed the principal avenue of access to the encampment; for it was defended in other places by almost precipitous cliffs.

The Indians who had followed Calvin still lay concealed, in obedience to his instructions.

At the pass Queen Esther herself came forward and demanded the delivery of the party who had fired on her guard. This request was refused by Charles, because the guard had been the first to fire, and because the whites were his friends, and were pursuing the Indians who had captured the unoffending maiden.

"You see I have the means of compelling obedience," said Esther, pointing to the long array of painted warriors behind.

"I see you have many brave men," said Charles, "but we have warriors quite as bold to meet them."

"But not so many, On-yit-hah," (bird of the strong wing.) "And why should the White Eagle defend the accursed pale-faces? Ay, he is a pale-face, too! And am not I a pale-face? But we have dwelt among the sons of the forest, to whom the great Ha-wen-no-yu gave the whole of the woods and the prairies. You and I are bound in honour to be the foes of their foes, the friends of their friends. Speak, On-yit-hah!"

"Queen Esther, it is too late to reverse the doom of the Indians. They now stand but as the trunks of the trees of the forest, while the pale-faces are as innumerable as the leaves or the stars of heaven. The leaves may fall; they return again in the spring; but the oak, once uprooted or felled, rises no more. It is in vain to speak of exterminating the white race on these shores. And whether King George succeeds in subjugating the people, or the people in throwing off their allegiance, the result will be the same to the doomed Indian. I will weep with you and mourn their sad destiny; but it would be worse than useless to contend for them in battle, and criminal to engage them on either side in the strife between the Colonies and the crown. Let us unite in preserving them from the danger on every hand, and thus we may contribute to prolong their existence."

"Enough, ungrateful boy! But you and I must perish with the doomed Indian! Know you not it is better to die nobly and quickly amid the smoke and slaughter of battle, than to ignominiously drag out a miserable existence and finally sink into contempt? Better that you, and the white maiden, and your Indian mother, and Thayendanegea's infatuated sister, should all perish than breed divisions among the warriors of the scattered nations. And you, degenerate son of the Lenni Lenappé," she continued, addressing Calvin, "why dost thou not sigh at the feet of some high-born white damsel?"

"Queen Esther!" replied the enraged youth, "whoever accepts me for a husband must be virtuous and contented with her lot. And such was not the case with thee."

"Fool! coward! wretch!" cried the exasperated old hag. "I will have you a prisoner and burn you at the stake!"

"Not so fast, madam, if you please!" said Calvin. There are warriors of my nation now crouching within call. Let your wolves but once more sound the warwhoop, and thou shalt be my prisoner!"

"Ha! ha! ha! The poor silly youth! Boasting of his Delawares when there are not two hundred of them capable of bearing arms if they were all collected from the four quarters of the earth!"

"We have Oneidas, Cherokees, and Shawnees in our camp," said Charles.

"Not seventy, all told, On-yit-hah. I learned at the council the numbers and probable localities of every nation. But Indians should not shed each other's blood. We came hither to fight the white men who slew our warriors. Will you give them up?"

"Not while there is an arm among us strong enough to raise a tomahawk!"

Queen Esther, seeing the pass could be defended by the small party already posted in the commanding positions, drew back, announcing her purpose to consult her chiefs once more before giving the signal for the attack.

Leaving the Highlanders under MacSwine posted in position to command the pass, Charles, who had been beckoned away by his foster-mother, slowly walked toward the tent. She lifted the curtain of dressed skins, and revealed a spectacle that caused the young man's bosom to swell with tender emotions. At the extremity of the pavilion he beheld Julia partly habited in the Indian costume, profusely and richly ornamented. At her feet sat the Indian maiden, her head reclining on the captive's knee, and her lustrous eyes fixed in admiration on her lovely face.

"The Brown Thrush is very kind to her pale sister," said Charles, advancing in obedience to the desire of his foster-mother.

"Oh, yes!" said Julia, smiling sadly. "She has been kind and loving. And what return can I make for such affection? To carry her into the habitations of our people would be to deprive her of happiness."

"Kacha Manito dwells in the air," said the Indian maiden, who had learned many English words. "He likes trees, flowers, rocks, and streams. He would not stay in strong houses.

"And I could not dwell in tents," said Julia.

"Unless detained as a prisoner," said Charles.

"O, then there would be no remedy," said she.

"Would the Antelope escape?" asked the Thrush. "If so, she shall return to her people; and, if she desires her Indian sister to go with her she will do so. And then the White Eagle will put down his tomahawk and rifle, and no one will watch to take away his life. His sisters would be very happy."

"But the Thrush would droop and die if taken from her native woods," said Julia.

"Then she would go to the Spirit-land and sing until her white sister and the White Eagle came. In that hunting-ground there are no rains to wet, no frosts to chill us. The good Manito makes all happy. No more dying, no more pain here," she added, placing her hand on her breast. "And hast thou any pain there?" asked Julia.

"Oh, yes! The Malcha Manito keeps saying I must kill the Antelope, or On-yit-hah (bird of strong wing) will fly away and return no more. But the Good Spirit whispers that when the Antelope dies the White Eagle will fold his wings on some high rock and close his eyes. I could not bear to see him so."

After a long silence, during which both Charles and Julia scanned with amazement the ingenuous features of the Indian girl, the latter asked the Thrush if she had not said she loved her white sister, and if she could really be induced to take her life if assured it would not grieve the White Eagle.

The Indian maiden said the Thrush never sang falsely. She did love her white sister dearly. She loved her before she ever saw her face, from the description her brother (Brandt) had given, and because the White Eagle loved her. But she said it would not be an unfriendly act to send her sister to the eternal flowers and fruits of the Spirit-land. She would be very happy there, and the Thrush would be very happy here with the White Eagle.

Charles and Julia only gazed in astonishment, mingled with painful forebodings. And the Indian maiden continued substantially as follows:—

"But her white brother might mourn, and never smile again. Then his forest-sister would do nothing but shed tears. No; she would not kill her sister. Her word was spoken. But her white sister might kill her. She would dig up a root for the Antelope to give her. She would take it from her snow-white hand and swallow it. She would be happy in the Spirit-land, and her pale-face sister would be happy with the White Eagle in the house of his white-haired father."

"No!" said Charles, with emphasis. "The White Eagle would be as miserable if his red sister died as he would be to lose his Antelope. Neither must die. But if one of them were to kill the other, On-yit-hah would dart up in the clouds and never alight upon the earth again. His sisters must live and love each other."

The Indian girl, smiling through her tears, wound her arms round the form of Julia, and kissed her repeatedly.

Charles, being informed by his Indian mother that a messenger from Queen Esther awaited him at the pass, hastened in that direction.

Julia's tears were wiped away by the silken hair of the forest-maiden, and they ate together the delicious viands placed before them by the Gentle Moonlight.

When Charles approached the pass where the messenger from the Senecas awaited him, Hugh MacSwine whispered to him, as he passed,—

"Be watchful, my laddie. Dinna trust him farther than you can see; for it's Girty!"

"Girty!" said Van Wiggens, hearing the name. "He's a tam rascal."

"I know him well," said Charles. "Never fear; but keep your rifles ready."

He then walked boldly forward, and accepted the hand which Girty offered him.

"I suppose, Mr Girty," said Charles, "you are prepared to announce the decision of Esther's council."

Girty hesitated a moment as if disconcerted. He had arrived upon the ground after the withdrawal of the Queen from the pass, and, as he was carefully painted and costumed like an Indian, it had been his wish to remain unrecognised.

"The eye of the White Eagle is clear," said Girty, not denying his identity; "and no doubt his wisdom has foreseen the result of the deliberations of the warriors."

"We have at least conjectured what might be the decision of our enemies," said Charles, "and we are prepared for any contingency."

"Be assured you are not prepared for battle," said Girty. "Five hundred Seneca warriors have arrived since daybreak."

"The few we have to oppose them," said Charles, "are prepared to die in defence of the white maiden and those who pursued her captors. But what is your decision? Shall we fight, or part in peace?"

"This is the decision, my young friend, as I would call thee:—The white maiden, and the party that pursued her captors, to return to their homes in Jersey, if you will remain and wed the Brown Thrush, and swear never to lift hand or voice against the Indians; or——"

"Let me hear the alternative!" said Charles, seeing Girty hesitated; "for that will be the sentence."

"Or else," said Girty, his penetrating eye fixed upon the counte-

nance of the young man, "the whole party—rescuers and maiden, the recreant Calvin and yourself, Gentle Moonlight and the Thrush—must depart immediately for Chilicothe and await the determination of a grand council."

"Will Thayendanegea be there?" asked Charles.

"He will."

"And Red Jacket?"

"He will."

"Then we will go to Chilicothe. Let the chiefs meet around the council-fire which has been burning for ages, and I will speak to them. But I warn you, Girty, not to molest us as we descend the river!"

"You are not to descend the Ohio The Queen says you might escape into Virginia. Your course will be south-west until you strike the head-quarters of the Sciota, down which you can float in canoes to Chilicothe. The Seneca warriors will follow in your rear: the rest of the Five Nations will proceed along the southern shore of Lake Erie, on your right, while the Tuscarawas will be on your left."

"I care not!" said Charles, "so they do not molest us. My word is passed to meet you at Chilicothe."

"The Queen has no confidence in the big Scotchman who has slain so many of her subjects. She recollects him well when he fought on the Conococheague."

"Then let her beware of him. for I know not whether he will be a party to the compact. If not, you may prevent his escape if you can. And I must also consult the white maiden before the agreement is ratified. If she will not go— —"

"She will go!" exclaimed Julia herself, who had besought the Indian girl to conduct her to the scene of conference, and had been led noiselessly round the cliff to where Charles and Girty stood. "Yes she will go with you to the grand council-fire at Chilicothe, and she will not depart from the wilderness until all her white friends may accompany her."

Charles signified his approbation by a proud smile. He knew not whether Julia had heard the first proposition; but, if she had, it was quite apparent she would not accept her enfranchisement on the terms proposed.

The announcement in camp that they were in effect the prisoners of Queen Esther was variously received, and by none with more secret satisfaction than poor Van Wiggens. Even his little mongrel cur, that had accompanied him, seemed to wag his blunt tail in delight; for he generally received as many blows from Mrs Van Wiggen's broomstick as his master got wounds from her tongue.

The aunt and sister of Brandt, now the Great Sachem of the Five Nations, did not doubt that his influence would be exerted in behalf of themselves and their friends. And David Jones thought he would have an excellent opportunity of being heard by the representatives of all the tribes. But neither he nor Charles had correctly estimated the powers of Girty, Mackee, and Elliot, who represented in the wild woods the military chest of Great Britain.

The Indians whom Calvin had induced to consent to aid in defence of the camp, upon being advised of the agreement, rose from their lurking-places, and, after uttering several halloos, dispersed in pursuit of

game. In vain the Delawares pleaded with Calvin to accompany them. He could not be torn away from the Indian maiden.

Charles and the Rev. Mr Jones, desirous of hastening to the place designated for the meeting of the grand council, urged forward the preparations for departure. The horses were packed without delay, and, as the aunt of Thayendanegea had quite a number of extra ones, the whole party was well mounted.

The first day some forty miles were accomplished, and they encamped on the Shenango River, selecting a position susceptible of defence. But there was no molestation, and after a hearty meal, the travellers, all excepting the sentry, were hushed in profound repose. The stillness of the night, however, was once broken by the fierce barking of Van Wiggen's dog, who snuffed the prowling wolves. Hugh MacSwine wished to kill him, as he might betray them if an enemy should be lurking in the vicinity. But this the honest Dutchman would not listen to. He took his "Vatch" in his arms, and, whenever he manifested an inclination to bark or whine, he choked him into silence.

Fortunately there were no enemies lurking in the vicinity; and the next morning, after a hearty breakfast, they resumed the journey. But as the meat had been consumed, several of the most skilful woodsmen were sent forward to kill game for the next meal. A buffalo they found afforded some sport, and during the day several deer also were slaughtered; so that there was no scarcity of provisions in the camp, and the remainder of the journey was accomplished without further difficulty or remarkable event.

When the party reached Chilicothe they were in advance of the Eastern Indians; but quite a number of Western chiefs and their families were present. Chilicothe was an old Indian town, and consisted of many huts of a more substantial character than those generally inhabited by the roving children of the forest. Gentle Moonlight possessed several of these houses, of which her deceased husband had been the proprietor, as well as a large body of land adjacent to the village. These she took possession of, and the whole party were soon comfortably domiciled in huts and tents.

But, as runners were constantly arriving from various directions, the place was continually agitated with news, sometimes encouraging to the captives, but often the reverse.

The Cherokees and Shawnees, as well as other Western Indians sojourning at Chilicothe, although they were very kind to the aunt and sister of Brandt, and friendly to Charles, Calvin, and the missionary, Mr Jones, did not seem to regard the other captives with the respect which had been hoped for. There were, besides, a number of prisoners from Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Kentucky, and they were so carefully watched and securely guarded that even the obtuse Peter Shaver could not avoid the inference that peace was not to be "calculated" upon.

Among the prisoners met with in the town was a tall, straight man, with broad shoulders and muscular limbs, denoting extraordinary strength. This was Daniel Boone, then in the prime of manhood; and it was the second or third time he had fallen into the hands of the Indians. He was a brave man, and the Indians loved him. He was as good a woodsman as any of their own chiefs, and they respected him so highly that extraordinary exertions were made to induce him to live

among them and become the head of a great family. But he had already a wife and children in Kentucky; and, besides, he loved the solitudes of the forest rather than the boisterous society of his fellow-men, whether savage or civilized.

The Rev. Mr Jones and Boone had often met before; and the latter had promised the preacher that when they encountered again, if there should be water, he would desire to be baptized. And now the preacher claimed the fulfilment of his promise.

On the third day after the arrival of the party at Chilicothe, the banks of the Scioto were lined with Indians, men, (old men mostly,) women, and children, to witness the baptism of "Captain Boone." But Mr Jones had not usually been in the habit of going down into the water with a solitary convert, nor was he under the necessity of doing so on that occasion. Along with Boone, the aged TAMMANY, a chief of the Western Delawares, Gentle Moonlight, and Brown Thrush, were baptized.

Charles and Julia also were silent spectators of the scene.

"Now Charles," said Julia, "what good effect will that produce?"

"They believe," said Charles. "They rely implicitly upon the truth of what Mr Jones has spoken. There will be no important change in their conduct. My foster-mother and sister were ever good and guileless."

"And now, Charles, the Thrush is a Christian!"

"Yes, but still an Indian. Why do you seem distressed?"

"These terrible rumours!" said she, as they slowly followed the dripping converts returning to their wigwams. "What is to become of us? I might have escaped from my captors, but I thought you would soon return with me, and I was impelled by a love of romantic adventure. I thought it would soon be over, and never dreamed of actual danger and real vexations. But they have brought me still farther into the boundless forest, I know not how many hundreds of miles away from——"

"From whom, Julia? You have no kindred on earth that you know of, and no better friend than myself."

"True. But will I not lose my best friend? Is he not surrounded by enemies?"

"We will escape, Julia," said he, in a low tone, (for James Girty, the brother of Simon, was, as usual, standing near them, and probably endeavouring to learn the subject of their conversation.) "Mr Boone," he added, "has planned it, and will accompany us. He has learned that the Indians intend making a hostile visit to Kentucky, and we will be there to receive them."

"Kentucky! still farther into the Western wilds!" said Julia, with a sigh, which indicated that her love of forest adventure, of which she had often boasted in her letters to Kate Livingston, was rapidly abating.

"Once there, Julia, we will be free. We will no longer be subjected to the tyrannical caprices of Queen Esther, who, I learn from the Seneca that came in this morning, declares I must either wed my Indian sister or else remain a prisoner."

"Will not the Indian maiden and her aunt go with us?"

"No. At least such is not her intention. If war ensues, as I fear

it will,—for the British agent here has arms, ammunition, trinkets, and money, to distribute without stint, and the Americans, not being similarly represented, are looked upon by my silly red brethren with contempt,—they would not be permitted to dwell among us."

"Then let us go! I fear your foster-sister will do some dreadful deed."

"Why?"

"She speaks fiercely and gesticulates violently in her dreams."

"She dreamed of war,—of her brother, no doubt, and thought he was slaughtering her Christian friends. No; she will never injure you. She might have committed violence on her own life, had not Mr Jones told her it would be a fatal crime and bar her entrance into the perennial paradise."

"Let us depart immediately!" continued Julia. "Oh, let us go before the grand council of warriors assembles! I know they will declare war. Indeed, as Mr Jones said last night, when the party came in from the Monongahela, their approach announced by the terrible scalp-halloo, which still sounds in my ears, war has already begun! And the horrid spectacle of human scalps, stretched on hoops, drying in view of our tent! It is too dreadful!"

"I know it. But control your emotions, Julia. Do not seem agitated and shocked by such exhibitions during the next few days. I did not like to announce the startling tidings that have reached us, for fear we might be betrayed by our feelings. But it is too true that the tomahawk has fallen on the heads of our people in some of the frontier settlements, and Mr Boone is convinced that the Five Nations will carry the Western tribes with them to the British. We must be discreet, and apparently indifferent to the occurrences around us; and soon we will be beyond the reach of our enemies. Be in readiness to fly at any hour of the night. Boone will plan everything."

"And will they not pursue us?"

"Certainly. But our party will number some twenty-five well-armed men, as other prisoners will go with us; and we will be able to keep the foe at bay until we cross the Ohio. Most of the warriors here are, as you see, old men. Boon is advised of the movements of those more active, now lingering on the Little Miami, where they have fallen in with a large herd of buffalo. We will have the start of them, as their runners will give notice of their approach and announce their success. In the meantime we must do nothing to excite suspicion."

"But why not go at once?—to-night?"

"Some of our men are unarmed. We must contrive to supply the deficiency from the British depôt, and Boone will devise the means. We must employ stratagem, and keep the boys and old men in good humour. They are, as you may have observed, exceedingly fond of diverting scenes; and Boone, though seemingly incapable of smiling himself, is preparing an exhibition for this afternoon which will amuse them. He has had Paddy Pence and Peter Shaver looking at the bloody scalps, and informed them (confidentially) that the only sure method of avoiding a similar fate is to be adopted into an Indian family. They have most eagerly consented, and an old squaw, the widow of a Choctaw warrior, has agreed to receive one of them as husband and the other as a son. The ceremony of initiation will take place this evening before

the assembled population of the village. Boone will be more popular than ever, and they will cause the Englishman to give the adopted couple two good rifles. And Hugh MacSwine, though so silent and grave, is heartily co-operating. His Scots will assume the Indian costume, indicating a purpose to undergo the ceremony of initiation as soon as Indians can be found to adopt them. Poor Van Wiggins would, I believe, prefer living among them to returning to his scolding wife. He, too, will probably be adopted to-day. Go now and cheer my poor sister. Tell her I am much pleased with her, and that I hope our heavenly Father will permit us to dwell together in paradise, never to be separated more."

Julia had scarcely entered the house of Gentle Moonlight when Charles heard the halloo of a small party of warriors returning from the South. From the sounds, he understood they had a prisoner and one scalp.

He soon after saw a young man of herculean frame led into the town. He was not made to run the gauntlet, for as yet war had not been formally declared, although it certainly existed. The prisoner's name was Simon Kenton, who, on subsequent occasions, suffered much harsh usage at the hands of the Indians, and has since figured in several romances. But, as this is a plain narrative of facts, we will not make any draughts on the imagination. He was a young man without education, an excellent shot, a good woodsman, a brave scout, honest and generous. But he deemed it no disgrace to steal horses from the Indians, and had just been taken in the act.

The ceremony of adoption was, as Charles anticipated, a source of unbounded delight to the Indians. After its completion and during the dusk of the deepening twilight, Boone and Charles, who still lingered on the margin of the river, espied a slight movement in a tuft of blackberry-bushes at the edge of the embankment and not exceeding six paces from where they sat. A moment after, they beheld a man slowly and noiselessly lift his head and gaze toward the village. They grasped their knives, for they had been talking of their meditated escape, determined, if it were an Indian who had been listening, to prevent him from frustrating their plans by taking his life, as they considered such a sacrifice justifiable when necessary for their own safety. But they were relieved on seeing the man approach them. It was Kenton, who had succeeded in secreting himself while the Indians were enjoying their sport, with the intention of effecting his escape as soon as it grew dark; but, fortunately, hearing the project of Boone and Charles, he wisely and nobly relinquished his purpose of immediate flight. He knew his disappearance would subject the rest of the prisoners to a stricter vigilance, and might cause the death of some of them.

"You are a noble fellow!" said Charles, upon learning his motive.

"And you shall escape with us," said Boone.

"Yes—never fear me!" said Kenton. "I'm harder to hold than an eel. They're in a good humour now. I didn't want any of 'em to see I had hid, though! The devil can soon get into 'em."

"And now, when you return voluntarily with us," said Boone, "their suspicion will be lulled."

"I thought of that," said Kenton, sitting on the root of a sycamore beside them. "Let's wait till they miss me and give the yell. There

It is now! I knew it! They'd've given me a hard race! They're coming! Now let us meet them."

They did so, and the warriors patted Simon on the back, and said, "You honest man! but musn't steal Indian's hoss. Don't be hoss-steal; don't be dam white man."

CHAPTER VIII.

BARTHOLOMEW CALVIN, after sitting some time gazing in silence at the handsome features of the Indian maiden who had innocently captured his heart and surrendered her own to another, rose up moodily and strode with melancholy aspect into the wigwam of his relative the ancient Tammany.

The old chief beckoned him to be seated, and pointed toward the pipe and tobacco. To his surprise, the young man declined smoking. He then ordered one of his wives to set some bear's-meat and honey before his nephew. These he merely tasted, and then, sitting at his uncle's feet, said he had come thither to receive his counsel. He explained to him the painful condition of his heart and his sentiments regarding the war.

"Listen!" said the old chief, leaning his feeble form against the wall of his house, which was hung with skins, and scanning his attenuated limbs, shrunken with age and palzied with debility. "I have not many words to speak; but my sister's son shall have them all. I am old. Yet the days of my youth seem as yesterday. So the life of an old man is but short. I look at my skin-covered bones and laugh" (and his wrinkled face was then beaming with bright smiles) "with the children that mock at me. They will soon be placed away, and then I will tread the great hunting-grounds where there is no age, no disease, no dying. Listen, sister's son! We pass like a feather blown away. Why should we wound and kill those people whom the Great Spirit sent to our shores? Can we kill them all and drive them hence? No; it is the voice of God. The Christian's God is the Indian's God. The Indian cannot oppose him. The Indian may fight for his lands and die with honour; but he must lose his lands, and then what is the honour of this world to him that dwells in another? You sigh for the Brown Thrush. It is well. When the White Eagle spreads his wings and passes the mountain, she will charm thee with her song. Then Brandt will come, fierce as the wolf-dog and as bloody. Go not with him. Obey the voice of God. It speaks in the acts of the white men. They are like the leaves of the trees or the stars of the heavens. They cannot be counted. She will go with you. She was baptized because she loved the Christian youth. She will follow him. But he will have another, fairer to behold than the Wild Thrush. He cannot have two. Then you may have one. Go to Sagorighwiyogstha," (Jersey, Doer of Justice.) "Die there in peace. Eat, wear warm clothes, sleep well, and be as happy as you can, and ever true and honest during life's short day. Then die. Death is only sleep. Awake in paradise. Meet me there. My sister's son, I have no more to say."

Calvin had listened intently, and every word of his ancient relative seemed engraven on his mind.

He withdrew and strode into the camp of the white people. Charles led him into his own tent, where none could intrude.

"You will not betray me, I know," said Charles; "and therefore I have brought you hither to make known our secret. The white prisoners will escape to-morrow night, and I shall go with them. Will you remain?"

"Does the Thrush go?"

"No."

"Then I will remain."

"Not, I hope, to follow Brandt?"

"No. But I shall probably follow thee with his sister."

"Alas! what will be her feelings when she learns I have fled from her? Calvin, I have never loved her as you do. My affection for her is strong, but it is only that of a brother. I shall pass many sleepless nights thinking of my poor devoted forest-sister. She loves me as you would have her love you. She is very beautiful and good, Calvin. And when I am gone, and married to another, my friend, watch over my forest-sister! Do not let her be destroyed. Bring her to the Jerseys, and, when she sees that men there never have two wives, she will love thee."

For an instant the fire of a long line of chieftains glimmered in the dark eyes of the Indian youth, and was then engulfed for ever in darkness. The words of his uncle still sounded in his ears, and the haughty reply another might have uttered died within him. Without speaking, he pressed the hand of Charles and withdrew.

During the following day quite a number of the Eastern chiefs arrived, and a great many skins were placed round the council-fire, (always kept burning,) to be in readiness for the assembling of the representatives of the nations.

In the afternoon Queen Esther's drum was heard. The blood of the prisoners ran cold in their veins. Preceded by the music, and followed by her guards, the implacable old woman first visited the grand council-chamber, and upon every skin she placed small pictures of the massacre of Cornstalk and his son Elenipsico, and Red Hawk, and the wife and babes of Logan. These had been engraved in Canada, under the direction of the Johnstone and Butlers, for distribution among the Indians. Then she walked round the council-fire three times, chanting one of her infernal songs, and casting brimstone into the flame.

Withdrawing from the council-chamber, she hastened to the house which had been prepared for her reception, and summoned the ancient chiefs of the Senecas to appear before her.

"My children," said she, "why have I seen the pale-face prisoners walking about with guns in their hands? Are we not at war? Do they permit their Indian prisoners to go at large? Where are the chiefs that were betrayed at Point Pleasant? Who knows that before another sun we shall not be attacked in our wigwams?"

Ughs, shrugs, and grimaces, followed this interrogation.

"What shall we do?" she continued. "We are to have war. The Great Spirit has told me so in the council-house. Then we shall kill our prisoners. But, before that time, suppose our prisoners kill us?"

The Senecas brandished their tomahawks and uttered fierce threats.

"We will not permit them, my children. To-morrow morning, at

early dawn, we will kill them all! That will be war! Then let the Oneidas, and Delawares, and Shawnees, and Cherokees, smoke the peace-pipe with the Americans, if they will!"

"Warriors!" said Red Jacket, who had followed Queen Esther, and anticipated some such sanguinary proposition, "hear what I have to say. Wait till all the chiefs and sachems, and the grand-sachem of the Five Nations, have met together and deliberated. This is all I advise." And he sat down.

"The Eastern prisoners are mine," said the old Queen, "and I may decide their fate."

"The sister and aunt of Thayendanegea are among them," said Red Jacket.

"They shall live," said the other.

"The White Eagle, Thayendanegea's white brother, is among them."

"If he will not wed Brandt's sister, Brandt will not mourn for him. He must die, if he will not marry and live with us."

"The Delaware youth, the son of Tammany's sister, is among them."

"He shall live, and marry Brandt's sister, when White Eagle is dead."

"I have spoken," said Red Jacket. "I have no more to say. Let my words be remembered."

The old Queen then dismissed the chiefs, without giving them any further directions. She relied upon their desire of vengeance for the loss of their brothers on the Alleghany.

It was near midnight. The fires in the wigwams had ceased to cast up their flames, and the smouldering embers threw a deep red glare over the sleeping forms of the Indians. They sleep as heartily as they eat, and repose is as necessary to them as food. Like the fowls of the air, when darkness comes their eyelids grow heavy. They do not have sentinels. Nor do they often attack in the night.

It was different with the whites. They were lying very still, it is true, with their fires burning low. But their eyes were open, each impatient to rise at the signal and be gone.

Boone, Kenton, and Hugh MacSwine were with Charles in the little tent communicating with the large one which contained the rest of the male prisoners. They were lying on their buffalo robes, speaking in whispers. The horses which were to convey them to the Ohio River were in readiness, a few hundred paces from the village, held by one of the faithful Scots, whose absence from the prisoners' wigwam had not been observed by the Indian who hastily counted the captives at night. And Julia assured them that she would be able to rise and leave her tent without awaking her companions.

It was now near the time of departure, and Charles grew impatient for the signal Julia was to give. The curtain of the buffalo-skins hanging between them and the large wigwam containing the rest was slightly agitated. Charles started up, but instantly resumed his recumbent position, knowing that Julia would not come from that direction, stepping over the bodies of the men.

Again the skin was moved, followed by a low sound, like the chirp of a cricket, and Hugh MacSwine sprang up hastily.

"I dinna think it can be him," said Hugh, "but it's like the chiel's midnight-signal. If it be you, Skippie," he continued, "come in, mon!"

The skin was thrust aside, and the whole party rose to their feet, with the bright blades of their brandished knives reflecting the dim red glare of the sinking embers. The form which stood before them was in the Seneca costume.

"Whisper low!" said Boone, grasping the intruder by the neck with his left hand, "or I'll let out your blood in the ashes."

"Loosen your gripe, mon," said Hugh; "don't you see his eyes are popping out? He's strangled mon, and can't speak."

"He may give the alarm-halloo," said Boone, staring at his unresisting victim.

"No," said Charles. "A spy would not have obtruded upon us in this manner. Release him, Mr Boone."

Boone did so, and the poor fellow sank down and breathed heavily, for he had been nearly suffocated.

"Skippie!" at length was uttered by him, as he placed a number of letters in Charles' hand.

"It is Skippie!" said Charles. "Never was any one so perfectly disguised! And he comes from my father. But I have no time now to read the letters," he added, thrusting them in his bosom.

"Bundle outside," said Skippie, pointing in the direction.

"What is it? What is it for?" demanded Charles.

"Miss Julia," was the reply.

"Return and take charge of it, Skippie. And follow us when we leave here to-night."

"Leave to-night?" asked Skippie, with unwonted energy.

"Yes."

"Good!" he said with apparent satisfaction.

"Why?" asked Charles.

"Dead to-morrow!"

This announcement produced, as was natural, great internal commotion; and Hugh, knowing the shortest method of obtaining information from his unique countryman, soon learned that Skippie had been an auditor at the brief conference held in Queen Esther's wigwam. The intelligence of her diabolical design filled the breasts of the prisoners with fierce indignation. Hugh proposed taking her life before departing; but this was objected to as hazardous and unnecessary. Hugh, however, was permitted to watch the sleeping guards of Queen Esther who had been stationed near the wigwam in readiness for the bloody work in the morning. They were wrapped in bearskins, and lay under a persimmon-tree, and Skippie had been compelled to step over some of their bodies to reach the tent. There was, however, another place of egress prepared for such a contingency. Nevertheless, Skippie's information was well-timed, for the presence of savages under the tree had not been discovered, and the escaping party would have stumbled upon them. A handful of sand thrown against the tent was the signal Charles had been waiting for, and the moment he heard it his keen knife glided noiselessly down the canvas. He stepped out, followed by Manton, who was to precede him to the place where the horses had been concealed. It was a starlight night, and the form of Julia, easily

discernible, was encircled by the arm of Charles, who led her softly away in the direction the guide was pursuing.

Boone brought up the rear, leading the prisoners, while Hugh and Skippie lingered behind to watch the sleeping Senecas.

They moved in silence, or spoke in low whispers; and so still was the night that they could hear the occupants snoring within several of the houses they passed. They were just opposite the last house, and supposed there was no further interruption and discovery, when a man run out from the hut and stumbled against Charles and Julia. Boone's knife was uplifted, and in the act of descending, when his arm was arrested on recognising a well-known voice.

"Tam her! Trunk! Snoring all te time! Hello!" he continued, when jostling Charles; and, seeing Boone's raised arm, cried, "Ton't! I'm Vil Wan Viggens, and—where's my dog? Here Vatch!"

"And, be the powers!" said Paddy, following, "do ye take me for yer falthy cur? But I don't wonder at it. You've been drinking. A pretty pass I've come to! A savage mother so drunk she can't stand up, and a Dutch daddy who don't know me from his dog! Here's yer dog behint me. He don't know ye when ye're disguised with such abominable bad liquor."

"Hush! Be silent, Paddy!" said Charles, placing his hand on the amazed Indianized Hibernian's mouth.

"Howly Mother! Is it you, Misther Charles!" asked Paddy, in a half whisper. "And where are ye going? And mayn't I go wid ye?"

"Yes. Follow and be silent."

"I'll go mit you too," said Van Wiggens. "I'm sick of being te husband of tat drunken old squaw."

"Fall in, and be silent," said Boone.

When they reached the horses (and Kenton had by some inscrutable means contrived to have not only the best animals of the Indians, but an extra number of them collected together) they all prepared to mount, being upwards of twenty in number, which included several prisoners who had been captured in the West.

Kenton, who had often been in the hands of the Indians, was quite as familiar with the country on both sides of the Ohio, and on the Scioto, as any of the red warriors themselves. He made Paddy and the Dutchman mount two of the supernumerary horses he had intended to lead; and when everything was properly adjusted, the cavalcade moved off at a brisk pace in the direction of Paint Creek. But before they had gone far they were startled by the awful voice of Peter Shaver's jackass in the Indian town. He brayed most discordantly, and the hills reverberated the sound.

"Somebody's been kilt," said Paddy; for Pater's ass never brays widout smelling blood. I hope, Misther Charles," he continued, in a lower tone, "it was none of us."

"It was not you, Paddy, nor I," said Julia, smiling.

"Och, Blessed Virgin! and it's you, is it, Miss Julia? I'd know yer voice the darkest night that iver shone! And where's the t'other little swatcheart?"

"One is enough, Paddy," said Charles.

"Enough, is it? Yes, and, be the powers, it's often one too many. And Van Waggens had one too many at home, and he must get another!

But it's glad I am to saa you have got rid of one, and she a wild savage!"

"Hush, Paddy!" said Julia, sharply. "She is a gentle creature, whom I love as a sister."

"True enough for you, Miss Julia! and was she not Misther Charles's Indian sister, and won't she be yours when you are——"

Paddy's words were arrested by a sudden commotion behind, caused by the arrival of Hugh MacSwine and Skippie, who came at a gallop.

"Hugh!" said Charles, gazing steadily at the excited countenance of the Scot, for they were now crossing a small prairie, and the stars were shining brightly, "you remained behind. Is that not the solution of the loud braying?"

"I did not see the ass," said Hugh, equivocating.

"Let me see you hand, Hugh."

Hugh held it out silently. It was covered with blood, as was also the sleeve of his buckskin hunting-shirt.

"It was wrong, I fear! very wrong; and we may repent it. There can be no peace now. And they will all join the British. I'm glad Mr Jones determined to escape with us. If he had remained, as was his intention yesterday, he would have been lost. To-morrow, the first white man they see, if it be not one of the infamous renegades, will be tomahawked or burned at the stake. How did you accomplish it? Whom did you strike?"

"I dinna ken their names," said Hugh. "But my dirk——"

"*Their* names. More than one then?"

"Three. Skippie led the way. They were to fall upon us in the morning with tomahawk and scalping-knife. That heated my blude The guard set over us will never see the dawn of day!"

"Terrible!" said Julia, leaning forward on her horse, and striving to shut out the horrible picture from her imagination.

"Did they alarm the village?" asked Boone, whose quick ear had caught the purport of Hugh's words.

"They never spoke a word, mon! There was only a whizzing gushing noise about their throats, a kick or two, and they were as still as ever. When Hugh MacSwine has one hand on a foemen's neck, and his dirk in the other, there are never any words or screams."

"But the ass?"

"De'il tak the ass! I vowed to cut his throat if I met wi' him again! But I didn't see him. He was biting the hazel-bushes round the tent, and when he smelt the blude he ran away squalling as if the de'il were at his heels!"

"And did he not rouse the Indians?" asked Charles.

"Skippie and I waited to see. Some did come out and gaze in the dark. But the ass had moved some distance from the dead men, who could tell no tales."

"Then why should we hasten so fast?" asked Julia.

"We heard the women screaming," said Hugh.

"Enough!" cried Charles. "Our escape has been discovered! We cannot conceal our trail. We must fly with the utmost speed. There can be no rest for you, my Julia, until we pass the Ohio. I hope you can bear the fatigue!"

"Oh yes, I can bear it," said she.

They increased their pace to the utmost, and the unerring guidance of Kenton kept them in the right direction. Boone was silent during the remainder of the night, riding by the side of Hugh and just behind Charles and Julia.

Charles being familiar with the habits of the savages, informed Julia that their pursuers would not start on their trail until daylight, and could not possibly overtake them before they reached the Ohio River, some fifty miles distant, if they met with no delay, and could keep their horses going until the next day at noon. And Kenton, keeping a little in advance, but within speaking distance, informed them with a chuckle, that the fleetest horses had been taken from the Indians, and those they could not take had been let loose in the woods, and might perhaps follow them without riders.

Neither Boone nor Charles, however, seemed to attach so much importance to the agency of horses as Kenton did. They were aware that the Indian himself could run for days without apparent fatigue, and that he could cross ravines which equestrians must pass round, and traverse swamps in the direct line of march where horses, if they did not deviate, would stick fast in the mud.

About the middle of the forenoon, and when Kenton was promising in a few hours more to show them the cliffs of the Ohio, the party halted abruptly, most of them with painfully throbbing hearts. On an eminence on the prairie through which they were passing, and in the line of march directly before them, they beheld a company of some forty Indians, who seemed to be returning from a hunting expedition, as their horses were laden with buffalo-meat.

"Will they attack us?" asked Julia.

"I think they will!" said Kenton, whose quick eye had instantly computed their superior number. "But we can whip 'em! I'll have a scalp for every horse they take!"

Charles perceived that the Indians were astonished at the apparition of such a cavalcade. Most of the whites—and they seemed themselves to have forgotten it—were not only Indians, but painted like them also.

But their mode of sitting on horseback and manner of riding, even at the distance of several hundred yards, could not long deceive the hunting-party as to the true nature of their quality. Himself, however, and Kenton and Boone, might counterfeit the Indian without liability to detection; and so the three, after giving certain directions to Hugh, advanced toward the opposite party.

Three of the Indians came at full gallop to meet them. They were Senecas. In answer to their inquiry, Charles said his men were a party of adopted prisoners going to Kentucky to hunt buffalo.

The chief who had addressed him said all that was very good, and asked if all the prisoners had been adopted without running the gauntlet.

Charles said he believed some were retained for the torture, and had been taken to Sandusky, where they would be probably burned at the stake, as their captors had painted them black.

The chief asked if they had not scalped and burned "Captain Kenton, a horse-steal rascal, d—— white man!"

Kenton made an involuntary movement, as if to cock his gun, but was checked by Boone.

Charles said they had not yet decided his fate, nor Boone's.

"Captain Boone! honest man!" said the Indian, while Boone's grave features relaxed into a smile. "What horse?" continued the speaker, staring in astonishment at the noble black animal Kenton bestrode.

"One he borrowed," said Charles, in the Seneca tongue.

The Indian flew into a violent passion, and accused them of lying. He said the horse was his own,—one he had left at home for his squaw to keep in good condition. He intended to ride him next spring, when they invaded the white settlements in Pennsylvania. He then ordered Kenton to dismount.

This Kenton of course refused to do, although Boone advised a compliance, as the only possible means of avoiding a battle. But the next moment it was quite obvious the surrendering of the horse would not have sufficed; for one of the Indians had recognised Kenton, notwithstanding his paint, as well as Boone, and, uttering the warwhoop, wheeled away and sped round in circles. The other two did the same, to avoid the bullets of the white men, whose rifles were instantly thrown up to their faces. The Indians were the first to fire, but did no injury, as they were in rapid motion and some eighty paces distant. But Boone and Kenton (Charles did not fire at all) were more fortunate. The first brought his man to the ground, and the other, as was supposed, wounded the claimant of the horse, for he fell forward on his horse's neck and did not rise again. The third seized his companion, who fell to the ground, and dragged him away by the hand while his horse was in a gallop.

The party came down from the hill at a furious pace, yelling terribly, and the whites retreated under cover of the sumach-bushes at the edge of the prairie.

"I've got no gun. I can't fight!" said Paddy, when they had dismounted in the bushes.

"You can fight with your knife, mon," said Hugh.

"And wouldn't they be sure to kill me?"

"No surer than if you were to sit down without resisting and be scalped."

"Murther! And I didn't have the sculp-lock taken off!"

"Here's one of my pistols," said the Rev. Mr Jones, coming up from the rear. "And let us all pray for protection and aid from above, and especially that this tender virgin may not be harmed. Get up you silly coward!" he continued, bestowing a smart kick on the back of Paddy, who had fallen on his knees. "There's no time to be kneeling now. Pray standing at your post or lying down with your finger on the trigger and your eye upon the enemy. Let your hearts pray, my brethren; this is no time for lip service. And remember that if the Lord of Hosts be on our side ten thousand foes cannot prevail against us. Be valiant men, obedient to your leaders, and take a steady aim!"

The Indians, seeing the effect of the fire of the whites, and knowing Boone and Kenton were among them, although superior in number, became very circumspect. They immediately abandoned the prairie and plunged into the woods bordering the opening. Their women and children were sent out of the way or hidden in the grass, and preparations made for an immediate assault.

Our party likewise made preparation. Boone led them a short dis-

tance to the left, where there was the fallen trunk of a gigantic tree, charred by the camp-fires of many a hunting and war-party. Behind this the horses were tied and fed, and a guard set over them, concealed in the long grass which grew among the larger branches of the prostrate oak. And here, too, Julia was deposited in charge of Mr Jones. The remainder of the party were then skilfully disposed by their experienced leaders, so as to make the place of Julia's concealment (the horses being likely to tempt the Indians) a sort of ambushment, and the most dangerous point for the enemy to approach.

When thus posted, our party, with a few exceptions, felt impatient for the battle to begin. They knew that pursuers were approaching, and dreaded being exposed between two fires. The Indians, however, were not inclined to accommodate them. They, too, were well aware that pursuit must have been made, and by delaying the attack their number would be augmented to an irresistible force.

An hour, which seemed half a day, thus passed, an occasional shot only being fired by the advanced scouts, from their places of concealment, when any portions of the bodies of their opponents were exposed.

"Why, Mr Kenton," said Paddy, who had been placed behind a beech-tree, with directions to keep his body concealed, and fire his pistol as fast as he could load if any of the Indians came in sight. "I say, Misther Kenton, this ain't sic a terrible fight afther all. And this is a rigular battle is it? Be the powers, I'll turn Indian-fighter meself! Be jabers! what's that?"

Paddy having slightly expose his coon-skin cap, the tail (which had been left on it for a plume) fell at his feet, and at that moment the sharp report of a rifle was heard in the bushes some sixty paces distant.

Kenton motioned Paddy to fall down and pretend to be dead. This Paddy did without hesitation, as soon as he comprehended the fact that the Indian's ball had grazed his head, and carried away the tail of which he had been so proud.

The Indian sprang forward to scalp his supposed victim, and received the fire of Kenton. He fell in an open space, clear of bushes, as he ran toward Paddy, pierced through the brain.

"I brought him, Paddy!" whispered Kenton.

"Oh, plase don't bring him here, Misther Kenton," said Paddy, who lay with his face against the ground, and could see nothing.

"No; he's lying yonder in full view. He didn't kick; he jest quivered a little, and then was limber. I've seen 'em do it before, when I got a good bead on 'em. But the other mustn't drag him off. Now, Paddy, if you want to show your bravery, and be a great man, run there and scalp him. I'll watch, and keep the others away till you're done."

"What! gore my hands wid human blood?" said Paddy, spreading out his trembling fingers.

"No, he'll not bloody you much. Make a ring round the scalp-lock with your knife, take the head between your knees, and pull off the skin with your teeth."

"Taath? Me taath?"

"Yes, that's the way they do it. I've seen it done often."

"Och, Mr Kenton, I'm sick! It's a faver-and-ager counthry. I've got a chale, and——"

"Hush!" said Kenton. "They're coming to drag him away."

"And ye'd 'a had poor Paddy to run right into their jaws!"

Again Kenton's rifle spoke the doom of an Indian, and the two lay together. Charles, and Boone, and Hugh MacSwine, seeing what had passed, concentrated the most of their men near that point, knowing the Indians would make a desperate effort to bear away their dead.

But, as they approached, it was apparent that the enemy had been beforehand with them. Two of the faithful Scots, incautiously exposing themselves, were fired upon from the little bramble-swamp beyond the fallen Indians and killed. This success of the foe was followed by yells of exultation. Several of them darted forward to scalp the Scots, but were driven back by the fire of Boone and Charles, one of them borne off by his comrades mortally wounded.

The fire now became incessant on both sides, in the immediate vicinity of the dead Indians. The Indians, however, were the greatest sufferers. The briery thicket in which they had collected having no trees to resist the balls of the white men, their death-yells were heard at short intervals. The whites were defended by trees, Paddy alone being exposed, but, as he lay perfectly still, he was supposed to be dead, and, of course, the enemy would not throw away their fire on him.

"Don't you move, Paddy, or you're a dead man!" said Kenton, reloading his rifle, which he had just discharged with effect at an enormous savage, who betrayed his locality, in endeavouring to aim at Boone.

"Lord!" cried Paddy, though careful not to move hand or foot. "I hear the bullets whizzing about like bumble-baas! That wasn't the rale battle we had at first! Now, we are fighting in earnest. Och, murther! I shall be kilt! I'm a dead man!"

"They won't shoot a dead man, I tell you," said Kenton. "Be perfectly still, and you're safe. They think you're dead."

"And do you mane to insinuate that they can saa me here?"

"To be sure they can—every one of 'em. And if you try to jump behind the tree again a dozen bullets will go through your body."

"Murther! And if they bate us they'll sculp me for a dead man! And my sculp-lock wasn't shaved off!"

"Be quiet!" said Kenton, having again added a victim to the list. The last one fell in attempting to bear off the first he had slain, who, no doubt, was a chief. "Paddy," he continued, ramming down his ball, "they'll hear your voice, or see your cap move when you speak, and then you'll be killed sure enough. Don't you see how they are barking my tree?"

"No; I don't want to see it," said Paddy, in a low tone.

"Tam dem!" said Will Van Wiggens. Here dey all come togedder!"

After something like a simultaneous discharge from behind the trees, which the enemy had drawn forth by a stratagem,—placing their blankets on poles and moving them to and fro in the bushes—the whole body of savages rushed out with brandished tomahawks, and yelling terrifically, charged upon the white men before they could reload their rifles.

Some of them fortunately had pistols, and, although they could do but little execution with them, they served to intimidate the foremost of the enemy.

"Stand fast to your trees!" cried Boone. "If one man runs away

we shall all perish. Fight with your tomahawks and knives—man to man, and we will conquer!"

"Give me your pistol, Paddy," said Kenton, whose tree was nearest to the advancing savages.

"I can't move," said Paddy. "Och, murther! are they coming?"

At that moment the foremost Indian, some twenty paces in advance of the rest, sprang forward, unconscious of the close vicinity of Kenton, and bestriding Paddy, stooped down to scalp him. Just when the knife touched the skin, and when Paddy yelled out "Murther!" the breech of Kenton's gun descended, and the savage fell upon his intended victim.

The rest of the Indians rushed past, Kenton himself being forced to fly before them, until they were opposed by Boone, MacSwine, Charles, and their brave comrades, who sprang from their trees and offered battle hand-to-hand. The Indians faltered a moment and then retreated. They snatched up their fallen chief who lay across Paddy's body and bore him along. One of them strove to drag the supposed dead Irishman by the leg, not having time to scalp him there. But this was resisted by Paddy with all his might. He kicked and yelled so astoundingly that the Indian relinquished his hold and fled with the rest. And Paddy, knowing it would be useless to counterfeit death any longer, sprang up and valorously fired his pistol. He then jumped behind Kenton's tree. It was all the work of an instant. Moments were precious when men were loading their rifles and foes were exposed to view. But the Indians soon vanished, bearing away their dead.

"Come on, my brave comrades!" cried Paddy, now in advance of all the whites. "We've defeated 'em. They're retreating, the savage blackguards! And one of 'em was astraddle of Paddy Pence! But Paddy pistholed him, the impudent blackguard! Charge, men, charge! They're retreating!"

Paddy was not mistaken. Charles understood the purport of the yells and whoops of the discomfited savages. Content to recover the bodies of their slain, they were retreating precipitately.

"Now let us make tracks ourselves," said Kenton, leading the way toward the horses.

"Yes," said Boone; we cannot be gone too soon. Our pursuers will come up quickly, and the attack will be renewed if we tarry."

CHAPTER IX.

The party were soon remounted, and resumed the flight at a brisker pace than ever. Charles rode at the side of Julia, a little in advance of the rest, and their course was over the eminence in the plain where they had at first discovered the Indians.

"Mercy on us! What is that?" asked Julia, hearing an awful sound, when they had proceeded only a mile or two from the scene of the recent conflict.

"Murther!" cried Paddy, spurring forward. "We shall have to fight agin. I know that voice!"

"Ah!" said Julia; "I recognise it too. It is Peter Shaver's ass, scenting the blood of the slain. Our pursuers have arrived!"

"They will be likely to pause at the scene of the recent action," said Charles, "when they learn its disastrous result."

A shot was heard, fired by one of the party who had lingered behind. This attracted no special notice at the time. But soon after Hugh MacSwine and Skippie (the latter still having the bundle he had brought from New Jersey) came up at full gallop; and Skippie, pausing an instant near Charles, said—

"*He* did!"

"Who?" demanded Charles.

"Hugh."

"It was his gun, then. And Hugh never misses his mark."

"No. Got the scalp."

Charles turned his head and beheld Hugh, some few paces behind, stretching a scalp on a hazel-hoop as he rode along.

"This is horrible!" said Julia, pale and shrinking, for she comprehended all, and had even glanced at the bloody Hugh. And, besides, the ass of Peter Shaver was still faintly heard in the distance.

Boone came forward and pointed to some distant heights before them, which were joyfully announced as the northern barriers of the Ohio River. There was, however, no assurance that they could elude their pursuers and pass the broad stream in safety. A raft would have to be constructed; the weather too must be calm, and the water smooth, before they might venture to embark.

These difficulties and contingencies being apparent to Boone and Kenton, a hasty consultation was held, as they proceeded at a smart pace; and it was determined by the majority—and Hugh MacSwine, of course, voted with the majority—that they would fight another battle. Charles saw the necessity of repelling their pursuers, but did not urge it.

They were now arrived at the beginning of a series of narrow ravines running between lofty hills, and here it was resolved to rebuke the foe. It was in the second of these ravines the first ambuscade was formed, it being deemed good policy to embolden their pursuers by permitting them to pass through the first in safety.

The men were stationed in places of concealment behind detached rocks and under evergreen bushes, commanding the path through the narrow defile. The Rev. Mr Jones, although he had no special objection to fighting the heathen in defence of his Christian friends, yet thought it proper, in view of his peaceful calling, to ride forward and remain with Julia during the carnage.

Not more than an hour had elapsed before the foremost of the savages came in view. They had passed through the first valley in safety, and did not seem to apprehend an ambush in the second one. Kenton recognised the owner of his steed in the foremost Indian, who seemed to be pointing at the foot-prints of his horse, which he could doubtless distinguish from the rest. They came in a long file, not more than two abreast, and the foremost of them were suffered to pass the concealed whites before the word was given to fire. Then a volley, consisting, by pre-arrangement, of but one-half the rifles, was discharged. Never were savages more completely surprised. They sprang in every direc-

tion, hoping to elude the aim of their foes. "Ugh! ho! yough!" were uttered by some, and by others the anglicism "Dern!" And yet, as Boone and Kenton were among those who had reserved their fire for the second discharge, only two or three fell under the aim of the Scots, and one, of course, by the fatal lead of Hugh MacSwine. Most of the men had fired too high.

At the second discharge five or six fell, killed and wounded, and the rest fled precipitately, yelling terrifically, and without striking a blow.

The whites did not pursue them, nor even scalp their fallen victims, but resolved without delay to resume their march toward the Ohio River. They urged forward their steeds, and soon entered another narrow ravine. This they passed through without halting, and continued their journey toward the river.

They knew that considerable time would be consumed by their pursuers in burying their dead, and that they would hesitate long before plunging into the next defile. Hence they hoped to escape further molestation.

During the afternoon they arrived on the northern bank of the Ohio; and many of them cast longing looks at the opposite shore, which once attained, it was the general supposition that they would be in a place of safety. But Boone and Kenton would not consent to the prevalent desire of the less experienced to halt and set about the construction of a raft. There were no natural defences at that point to enable them to keep a hostile party of superior numbers at bay during the preparations for the passage. And, besides, a strong wind prevailed, and the waves ran too high for any raft to ride in security. Nor would it answer to remain stationary until the subsidence of the gale, for the Indians would be upon them. Kenton had been captured once with a fine lot of horses, by thus remaining inactive until the foe, following his trail, surprised him.

Profiting by his experience on that melancholy occasion, Kenton led the way along the path down the river, so that the distance between them and their pursuers might not be diminished.

Thus they continued without interruption until the autumnal sun, blood-red and magnified apparently to an enormous size, sank down before them, for their faces were toward the West. They now searched for one of those impregnable fastnesses in the hills, with its natural defences of rocks and fissures, in which to encamp for the night; and, when it was found, the tents were erected, the hungry permitted to eat, and the weary to rest. The wind continuing somewhat boisterous, it was the opinion of Boone and Kenton that a passage over the river could not be effected until the following day.

After a hearty repast, Kenton and several of the most active men started back on their trail to discover, if possible, the camp-fire of their pursuers.

The scout proceeded several miles, and then ascended a high eminence, from which they could see eastward a still greater distance; but no fires were visible. It was possible the pursuit had been abandoned, and such was their report on returning.

And now a sense of comparative security pervaded the encampment. Julia and Charles sent for Skippie, resolved to read the letters he had brought from their friends. But Skippie was nowhere to be found,

although he had been seen since twilight. Doubtless, as Hugh MacSwine asserted, he was out alone, reconnoitring the country in every direction.

An hour after, Skippie came hastily into the tent.

"Your news, Skippie?" said Charles.

"Twenty!" said Skippie, pointing in a westerly direction and in the line of their march for the next day.

"Twenty Indians in front of us!" said Julia, in tones of sadness.

"They are not our pursuers, at all events," said Charles.

And, when Skippie had described them and the location of their camp in his laconic but graphic manner, Boone announced without hesitation that it was a party from Paint Creek going over to Kentucky on a predatory expedition; and, no doubt, the object of their attack was his station on the Kentucky River, called Boonsboro.' He had seen their trail, but he did not mention it, as it was not fresh. They must have been encamped several days when Skippie discovered them, perhaps awaiting the arrival of reinforcements.

A council being held, it was resolved to attack them in the night. They occupied an important position in the line of march for the next day. The Indians had, no doubt, been making preparations for crossing over into Kentucky, and probably possessed canoes, which if captured, would serve an excellent purpose.

Arrangements were made to set out immediately. Skippie, who could move with less noise than any one in camp, was despatched on their back trail to guard against any sudden surprise from that quarter.

Kenton was the guide selected to lead them against the warriors encamped near the river. Familiar with the features of the country, having often traversed every hill and ravine, the few words uttered by Skippie had made him sufficiently acquainted with the locality of the Indians. He had himself encamped there repeatedly.

The moon was shining brightly, for there was not a cloud in the sky. A long silence ensued, interrupted only by the low sound of more than twenty feet falling softly to the earth. And as they drew near the smouldering embers round which the slumbering Indians reposed in fancied security, their progress became very slow, and their scarcely-perceptible advance was no longer attended with any noise which might have been detected by the keenest ear at the distance of a dozen paces.

The camp of the Indians was situated near the mouth of a valley opening on the river. But a stream of water, emptying into the Ohio, with its steep alluvial embankments, was now between the sleeping Indians and their assailants, and the latter had to pass down the brook some twenty paces before there was any possibility of crossing over. Kenton and Boone stood several minutes in breathless silence, opposite the slumbering Indians, the outlines of whose forms were dimly visible, and then moved on noiselessly toward the moss-covered trunk of an enormous tree that lay across the stream a few paces farther down. This tree, some eight feet in diameter, Kenton remembered distinctly, having often passed over it. It had been lying there, perhaps, for a century, and its damp moss and soft exterior afforded a sure and noiseless footing.

The head of the line passed over the tree and returned up the stream

on the opposite side, diverging from it, however, so as to enclose the enemy. It was a moment of painful suspense. Charles could distinctly hear poor Paddy's heart palpitating violently when they were midway on the huge trunk and the word to halt was whispered back along the line. A wolf had crept up to the smouldering fire and snatched a bone, with which it sprang away growling. Several of the Indians moved and uttered some words, but did not lift their heads, for they recognised the sound and were familiar with the prowling habits of the animal. It is probable the consciousness of the proximity of the wolf served to lull them; for it was not likely an enemy could be near when the ravenous beast was in their midst. None but Boone and Kenton could have approached so noiselessly; and the Indians did not suppose those renowned and dangerous foes were in the vicinity.

The slumberers being composed, the sign was made for the men to resume their cautious approach. But, when a single additional step had been taken, another pause was ordered. An owl flapped up from the feet of Boone, where he had been assailing the eyes of a deer's head thrown aside in the bushes. It was one of the largest specimens of those birds of ill omen; and it now hooted loudly, perched on a bough immediately over the prostrate Indians.

"Och, murther!" said Paddy.

Charles reached forward, and placed his hand on Paddy's mouth.

Several of the Indians stirred again, and uttered incoherent words. But the owl was a familiar bird, and supposing he had been alarmed by the wolf, they slept again.

Boone and Kenton, having reached the designated point, only awaited the closing up of the rear of the line to begin the slaughter. Their guns were at their shoulders, their knives loosened in their sheaths, and each had selected his victim for the indispensable sacrifice.

But when Will Van Wiggens, who, from his corpulency, was the heaviest man of the party, made his next step midway of the tree, the huge rotten trunk sank down suddenly, precipitating the men with a thundering sound and a mighty splash into the water and mud beneath!

So sudden, so unlooked for, so ludicrous was this event, that the men who aimed their rifles, standing within a few feet of the heads of the Indians, became irresistibly convulsed with laughter, and fired without effect. The Indians escaped without injury. They disappeared in the bush, their ears assailed only by the sounds of immoderate laughter! But they fled away, leaving their guns behind, amazed at such ill-timed merriment, and believing themselves beset by evil spirits.

After the prolonged laughter had in some measure subsided, a search was made for canoes, and several were found tied in the mouth of the creek. These they took possession of, and, placing the arms of the Indians in them, left a guard to watch until all the baggage could be removed thither from the camp. The wind had ceased its violence, and, as the surface of the Ohio was as smooth as a mirror, they determined to cross over early in the morning.

They were met, however, on their return to the camp, by Skippie, who, in an unusual excitement, briefly informed them that their pursuers were advancing, led by Girty, who had joined them after the ambuscade. He said they were within three or four hours' march of them, approaching cautiously, and apparently resolved to make a

desperate struggle before permitting the fugitives to escape with their horses.

"I'll have all the horses in Kentucky in less than an hour!" said Kenton.

"And I'll see that the people get over," said Boone. "We are safe now, my young friend," he continued, addressing Charles, "at least for some days to come."

"True, sir," said Charles, quickening his pace, and with difficulty keeping at the side of Boone, whose giant strides usually impelled him forward beyond his companions; "and I am extremely thankful for it."

Julia seemed pleased to learn that the enterprise against the Indian encampment had resulted without bloodshed, and the patriotic Baptist gave thanks for the easy victory, not doubting the hand of Providence had shaped the expedition and produced the bloodless end. The great trunk over which multitudes had been passing from time immemorial, and upon which numbers had stood that night, seemed to have fallen precisely at a juncture admirably adapted to facilitate the escape of the Indians. A little sooner or later, and human lives would have been sacrificed.

Such were the deductions of Mr Jones and the maiden. But Hugh MacSwine and Will Van Wiggens ascribed the escape of the savages to the devil, who had first assumed the form of a wolf and then an owl.

No time, however, was lost in such idle speculations. The maiden was soon mounted, and the whole party pushed on toward the river with all the expedition in their power. And when Julia reached the scene of the recent accident, Kenton's voice was heard urging the horses into the stream. It was a frosty night, though calm, and the animals, plunging and snorting, evinced their reluctance to swimming. They were nevertheless constrained to submit, and were soon gliding toward the Kentucky shore.

Julia was placed in one of the canoes and rowed over by Charles. At every stroke of his oar the poor girl's spirits rose, and her eyes sparkled in unison with the glittering drops that fell from the oars in the moonlight.

They spoke of their friends and homes in New Jersey,—of Charles's Indian mother and sister, whom they loved and pitied, but did not regret being separated from them,—of the beautiful country and pleasant climate they were about to enter,—and of the means of returning thence to their Eastern abode. Not one word was uttered of their deep and ineradicable love. It was too sacred for words—too manifest to be questioned.

The horses were soon landed in safety. The event was announced by three loud huzzas from Kenton; and, striking a light, his locality was marked by a great bonfire on the southern shore.

MacSwine and Van Wiggens were the last to embark; and after entering their canoe they lingered under the clustering boughs of the trees that hung over the water, the one hoping to add another victim to his catalogue, and the other watching for his dog, which had disappeared in the encounter at the ambuscade. Nor did they wait very long before the pursuing party came in view upon their trail, and Hugh had the satisfaction of putting an end to the existence of another human being. The one he killed had come to the bank, after the discovery that the

fugitives were beyond his reach, and gazed in disappointment at Kenton's great fire, in the broad glare of which the smoking horses were plainly visible. He stood within six paces of Hugh's muzzle, and fell, without a groan, into the deep water.

But the discharge of MacSwine's rifle was followed by a rush in that direction, and the bloodthirsty Scot became aware of his danger. He could not now leave the sheltering willows without being seen and fired upon; nor could he remain long concealed from their view where he was. So he recharged his gun, and determined to have another victim before he fell, if such was to be his end. But the Indians, fearing an ambush, kept themselves hidden, in readiness, however, to fire upon any canoes that might push out from under the clustering willows.

"Dere he is!" said Van Wiggens in a whisper, hearing a dog yelp. "Dat's Vatch! I know his cry. Let me out and I'll vistle for him."

"What, mon!" said MacSwine, "lose your life for a dog? I dinna' ken how much your life is worth, but I value mine at a price aboon that."

"Dere he is! It's Vatch!" continued Van Wiggens, hearing a dog whining distressfully on the bank, and afterward seeing him indistinctly through the intercepting boughs.

"It won't do, mon!" said Hugh; "we maun awa' from this. They're cooming down the creek. Lift your gun and we'll fire together." They did so, and under cover of the smoke which descended upon the water, and during the momentary consternation produced among the Indians, (for two or more of them had fallen,) MacSwine made several vigorous strokes of the oars, which caused the canoe to glide out rapidly from the shore. "Noo fa' doon on yer face, mon!" he continued, setting the example to his companion, and knowing that the impetus he had given the light bark would soon carry it beyond the reach of the enemy's balls. But, before attaining that distance, the yelling savages sent a leaden shower after it. The water was ripped up around them, and the frail canoe was perforated in several places, but its occupants fortunately escaped without serious injury.

MacSwine and Van Wiggens, upon landing, were much applauded. But, when conducted to the great fire, upon which an enormous quantity of wood and brush had been piled, as if an illumination had been the design, poor Van Wiggens' spirits sank again upon hearing the melancholy howl of his dog on the opposite side of the Ohio. He ran to the water's edge and called to "Vatch" to swim over; but in vain, as the dog either would not, or was not permitted to obey him.

Then the ears of the whole party were saluted with a familiar sound. This was the deep intonation of Peter Shaver's ass. Upon scenting the blood, he brayed forth his sense of the horrid deed upon the solemn midnight air; and the melancholy reverberations rumbled from shore to shore up and down the river.

This was succeeded by nine lusty cheers from the whites, while the furious savages made the night more hideous with their demoniac yells. The river was some six hundred paces wide, and at that distance Kenton could easily make himself heard and understood. And so he not only boasted of the number of horses he had captured, but ostentatiously paraded them in view of their recent owners. Then an impromptu dance of victory followed, in imitation of one of the exultant

ceremonies of the Indians, at which Charles smiled but faintly, for he thought no good could result from thus wantonly exasperating the enemy.

And when it was over, Simon Girty, standing on the opposite shore near a fire he had kindled, and in the light of which, under the shadow of an overhanging tree, he could be recognised, said in a loud voice, "War is now declared! There are not one hundred men in Kentucky. We'll see you again; you steal horses, and huzza over it before the faces of their owners!"

"Shut up, you renegade traitor!" answered Kenton. "The blackest nigger is a gentleman at the side of Simon Girty! I'll change my name from Simon to Sam, and call my mangy old sheep-killing cur 'Simon' —Simon Girty!"

"Ah, Kenton," said Girty, "such is your gratitude! I saved your life, and thus you thank me. Very good! I will be wiser next time!"

Kenton was silent for several minutes. It was known that Girty had truly interposed and saved him from being tortured at the stake.

"I don't deny it, Girty," said he; and I thank you for it. But I have twice spared your life since then, when you were within reach of my rifle; and I am bound in honour never to kill you, if I can help it. But I owe you nothing. You lead the savages in their attacks, and they slaughter our women and children,—your own people, and perhaps your own kin. I must defend them, and if you should fall by my hand it will be no fault of mine. Kentucky is my home, and it shall be my grave, before I leave it at the bidding of you and your baby-murdering savages."

Kenton said no more, but sought the repose so much needed after the exciting scenes he had passed.

Nevertheless, the eyelids of Charles and Julia were not oppressed by slumber. They eagerly broke open the letters from home brought by Skippie. The first one perused was from Mr Schooley. It ran as follows:—"Esteemed Julia:—If this should reach thy hands, thee will be informed that thy guardian and friends have been sorely grieved at thy capture, and at the supposed privations thou hast been exposed to in the wilderness; and thou wilt learn that it is not credited by thy guardian and others that the Indians were the authors of thy abduction; but we think it was the work of thy pretended friend the rebel——"

"That must be me," said Charles.

"How could he be so much deceived?" said Julia, a flush of deep indignation overspreading her forehead.

"He is not deceived, Julia," replied Charles.

"What?"

"He is well convinced I had no agency in it."

"He certainly would be, if he knew all. But what does he say further? Yes," she continued reading:—"Rebel, Charles Cameron. But I have sent £100 to Governor Hamilton for thy redemption. And if thee will say so to any of the Seneca or Mohawk chiefs, they will conduct thee to Canada, where thou wilt be ransomed; and I have requested them to send thee by a safe guard to New York, which thee should be rejoiced to learn is now held by the army of George, our liege lord and sovereign; and from thence thou wilt be permitted to pass with a flag through the rebel army to thy home, where thou wilt

be received with affection. The £100 was truly thy money, upon which thou wert entitled to interest, and which with other matters of business, we will adjust when thou returnest hither. Mary sends her loving greeting to thee; and she sends thee divers articles of apparel which thee will probably stand in need of. And now I will repeat to thee the great danger thou wilt incur by retaining thy partiality for the rebel youth. The British army is soon to possess all of New Cæsarea, (New Jersey,) New York, and Philadelphia: and thee must be aware that when the rebellion is put down its adherents will be subjected to forfeitures and other pains and penalties. So if thee should commit thyself with the young man, it will be out of my power to serve thee. The whole of the fine estate left by thy father will be lost, and thou wilt be a beggar, mourning over the execution of thy unworthy lover."

"I shall read no further!" cried Julia, throwing the letter into the fire. Then, tearing open another, she read as follows:—"Esteemed Julia, I pine for thy return. I would have followed thee, and remonstrated with thy abductors, but it was necessary to secure the harvest which is to supply us with bread."

"Richard loves good eating as well as his sweetheart," said Charles.

"Oh, better!" said Julia. "And thou knowest, besides," she continued, reading, "it had been decreed in the rebel legislature that all those who abandon their lands shall not possess them again. I would take no part in the awful conflict. I am a loyal subject; but I would not fly from my home. I am a non-combatant, and cannot abandon our society in conscience or for interest. I hope thee will return and attend the meetings. If thou wilt, I will agree to have our nuptials published——

"That will do," said Julia, laughing heartily, and likewise consigning the epistle to the flames.

Charles then read a brief letter from his father, charging him to take care of himself, and to remain true to the cause of the tyrant's enemies. He said it was probable the armies and fleets of the usurper would seem to prevail at the commencement of the conflict, but that the cause of justice would triumph in the end. France was secretly favouring the Revolution, and would, before its termination, become an open ally of America. He charged his son to suffer no uneasiness on his account. There were men anxious to effect his capture, set on, he believed, by Mr Schooley, for he was in correspondence with the British, and had already caused some beeves to be driven to them on Staten Island; but they would not succeed. His few Scots remaining with him, were vigilant, and his little fortress impregnable. Besides, it was believed by many, since he escaped burning, that he bore a charmed life. His health was good, and his hours were pleasantly passed over the pages of Shakspeare and the productions of other sons of genius. Commanding him sacredly to guard the captive maiden from every harm, he concluded, by imploring his Maker to spare his son for the comfort of his declining years.

Charles then, his eyes suffused with tears, and his bosom swelling with reverence and affection for his parent, would have prevailed on Julia to seek the refreshing repose he fancied she stood very much in need of. But he knew not the extent of the capacity of the sex for prolonged watching, and she merely smiled at his solicitude, and declared that no

slumber would visit her eyes if she were to lie down; but she would be silent while he slept, and guard his peaceful repose. This he objected to, and begged her to read the remaining letter,—an epistle from Kate Livingston.

When Julia ceased reading, the dawn was apparent in the east. Charles heaped fresh wood on the fire, and prevailed on her to sleep until the breakfast should be prepared. He knew that the meat for her repast was then living, and would have to be found and killed; so she would, in all probability, have ample time for refreshing slumber. He likewise sought repose himself at the side of Mr Jones, who sometimes uttered prayers in his sleep, but more frequently sang snatches of the Psalms of David.

It was a calm, frosty morning, rosy with the deep red rays of an autumnal sun, in what is termed the Indian summer. Boone and Kenton rose perfectly refreshed.

"I don't know how you feel, Mr Boone," said Kenton, stretching back his broad shoulders, "but I am comfortable. I can breathe freely on the glorious soil of Kentucky; and the climate is a thousand times better than it is over the river yonder."

"The soil and climate are well enough, Simon," said Boone, sighing, "and there's plenty of game. But it makes me unhappy to see so many people coming to cut the trees and shoot the buffalo and deer. If you and I could only live here alone, I wouldn't ask a better paradise. No matter! When neighbours get too thick, Daniel Boone can go farther west."

"I like having enough neighbours to keep back the Indians, and to sell horses to," said Kenton. They then disappeared in the cane-brake in quest of game for breakfast, and, before many minutes had elapsed, the sharp reports of the rifles were heard.

CHAPTER X.

"It's a baver!" said Paddy, in reply to Van Wiggens, who, upon awaking from his troubled slumber, and hearing the report of a gun on the river-bank, had walked in that direction. Paddy, as he answered, was endeavouring to take a steady aim at the "varmint," which, most singularly for a beaver, did not sink beneath the surface, but persisted in its efforts to ascend the low embankment.

"Let me see!" said Van Wiggens, cocking his gun and peeping over. "Tam your Irish eyes!" he cried, a moment after; "if you shoot him I'll kill you! He's a dousand times better as you!"

"What! Isn't it a baver?" asked Paddy, upon hearing a low whine.

"Baver, de teiffel! It's my Vatch!" cried Van Wiggins, dropping his rifle and sliding down into the water, unmindful of the chilling bath, and hugging the poor shivering animal in his arms. "Poor Vatch!" he exclaimed, in broken tones of pity and affection; "you've been swimming all night to reach your master, who has nobody else to love since Mrs Van Viggens sold herself to der teiffel. And de savages nearly starved you, Vatch! See how little your pelly is! And de tammed fool Irishman," he continued, in tears, "has been shooting at

you for a *baver*, as he calls it. Come, Vatch! you shall have plenty of my breakfast before te hot fire." Still holding the grateful dog in his arms, Van Wiggens ascended the embankment and strode toward the fire, and was followed by Paddy, over whom the fumes of the broiling venison exercised quite an attractive influence.

After a hearty repast the party set out in the direction of Boone's station. They followed a broad buffalo-trail which led to the mineral springs afterwards known as the Blue Licks.

The climate seemed to have a most extraordinary effect upon the spirits of all. Kenton was continually leaping up, hallooing, and letting off some hunter's joke that produced laughter. Boone's eyes had a bright, merry look. Several of the prisoners who had been captured in Kentucky, and among them a hale, hearty fellow named Chapman, had a propensity for crowing.

"Foo! Vat's dat schmells so?" exclaimed Van Wiggens, who rode a short distance in advance.

"The mineral springs," said Charles. "Our horses have been for some time pricking forward their ears and snuffing the breeze. And will we not find buffalo there?" he continued, addressing Boone.

"Certainly. Don't you see the fresh sign? And we must kill a fresh supply for the winter."

A profound silence ensued as they proceeded, and all gazed in admiration at the most lovely country they had ever beheld. The climate was truly delightful, the soil fertile, and the surface pleasantly diversified with hill and valley, woodland and prairie. It teemed with game of every description; and hardly a minute passed that some one of the party did not behold buffalo, elk, bear, or deer.

Kenton led a number of men in advance of the rest to the Licks, and soon their guns were heard dealing death among the buffalo. Those huge animals had collected that autumn in vast multitudes, meeting, as if by concert, at a common rendezvous; and gone thither from all the adjacent countries for hundreds of miles it was feared they would soon be followed by the Indians, their natural proprietors. Therefore, Boone advised a speedy departure from the vicinity. A few hours would suffice for the slaughter of buffalo.

Boone remained with Charles and Julia, having no disposition to partake of the sport. His thoughts dwelt upon his family, who had been left at the settlement on Kentucky River, and from whom he had been separated many months. He would soon see them if they still remained at the station. But who can tell, in a time of such vicissitudes what might have happened?

"Mr Boone! Mr Boone!" cried Paddy, who with the rest, drew rein and listened to a strange rumbling sound which appeared to shake the very earth, "what is that? Is it a hurrycane?"

"Follow me!" cried Boone, with an excited countenance. And they had no sooner paused under the boughs of a dense grove of giant sugar-maples, several hundred paces west of the great trail, than an immense drove of the wild cattle came rushing past. It was a torrent which would have swept through an opposing army.

"Merciful heaven!" cried Julia, as the astounding apparition swept by.

"There is no danger here," said Charles, breathing freely. "Mr Boone has saved us."

"And ye're quite sure we're saved?" asked Paddy. "Then, be the powers, I'll have a crack at 'em!" And, after a hasty aim, he fired at the moving mass of animals, the nearest of them being only some fifty paces distant. "Howly Vargin!" he cried, "I've kelt a dazen at layst. Saa how they tumble over!" he had, indeed, by a lucky shot, brought one of them down, and many of the rest fell over him. Several, untouched by Paddy's lead, were trampled underfoot and never rose again. And when the thundering mass had vanished, it was with great exultation that Paddy claimed them all as the extraordinary product of his fire.

Resuming the broad buffalo trail, the travellers approached the Licks. In the immediate vicinity of the springs the earth seemed to have been scooped out or trodden down many feet in depth, for hundreds of paces in circumference; and this had been done by the animals resorting thither for ages.

The hunters had already collected a vast number of *tongues;* and these, with the best of the skins, made quite as heavy a burden as the horses could bear.

About the middle of the afternoon of the second day after crossing the Ohio, the party paused on the summit of a high cliff on the northern bank of the Kentuck River. With a palpitating heart Boone gazed in silence at the narrow track of bottom-land on the opposite shore. Then, seeing the smoke curling up from the cabins, his face beaming with delight, and every nerve quivering with pleasurable excitement, he uttered a loud, clear halloo upon the still air, which was borne over the surface of the bright water. After a brief pause it was answered from the other side by a voice Boone seemed to recognise; and this was succeeded by a dozen others. Though long given up as dead, Boone's halloo was known. Whoops and cheers were soon uttered in quick succession, and the people were seen running about in great commotion.

"Thank heaven, I see women and children!" said Julia.

"But not mine! not mine!" said Boone, straining his eyes, with his hands on his forehead. "I see my brother, two sons, but no wife, no daughter! Gone! They would have known my voice better than the rest. Not there! no, they are not there!"

"You should not suppose they have fallen into the hands of the enemy," said Julia, witnessing his emotion with concern, "since the rest seem to have escaped."

"No," said he, recovering his self-possession, "I have no fear of that. I know what has happened. They supposed me dead, and returned to North Carolina. No matter. They have not taken the fort and the country with them, and I can bring them back."

Kenton, having assembled the horses and men in full view of the little settlement, gave a signal, and the air was rent with cheers. The people on the opposite side of the river seemed almost wild with joy, and sent over all the canoes they could command; and our party, following the winding path down to the water's edge, were met and rapturously greeted by the FIRST SETTLERS OF KENTUCKY. And it may be said that the example of extending a hearty welcome to a returning friend or a wandering stranger, practised by those adventurous pioneers, has never since been forgotten by their noble and generous descendants.

Julia and Charles, and all the weary fugitives, were now in a place of comparative security. Nor was Boone quite correct in his conjecture. His wife, it was true, with some of the younger children, had returned to North Carolina. His favourite daughter remained, and had been prevented from coming forth on hearing his voice by an attack of the ague,—a disease which had periodically assailed her before leaving Carolina. But she was quite well the next day, and succeeded in cheering the heart of her affectionate father.

Skippie's bundle was now opened, and Julia overwhelmed him with thanks for the timely addition to her wardrobe.

The men made but little change in their dress, as all the hardy pioneers were habited in buckskin hunting-shirts; and, with the exception of their faces, which they washed occasionally, their resemblance to the Indians was not very remote. They wore moccasins, leggins, and in cold weather, blankets, and each had his rifle, tomahawk, and knife. With the latter they carved their meat or scalped an enemy as occasion required.

After sojourning in the fort some days in perfect repose, those who had no intention of becoming citizens of the country began to make preparations for returning to their distant homes. But these preliminaries were cut short by the arrival of a prisoner who had escaped from the Indians, and who stated that the enemy were organizing an army for the purpose of exterminating the white intruders in Kentucky, and their arrival might be looked for in a few days.

This, according to Paddy's idea, which he strove in vain to impress upon others, was a conclusive reason why they should hasten to depart.

The fort was immediately repaired. It consisted merely of a quadrangular structure of some forty connecting log-cabins, the doors opening on the square within. The hardy pioneers relied more upon their own bravery and skill with the rifle for security than upon the usual artificial or scientific defences of civilized warfare.

On the present occasion, when the history of Charles and Julia became known, and the sanguinary adventures of Hugh MacSwine were related and the horse-stealing feats of Simon Kenton duly discussed, a belief prevailed that a more determined and desperate attempt to destroy the settlements would be made than any hitherto experienced; and preparations were made accordingly.

But still the savages delayed the assault, and, as the frosts were crisping the leaves, it was hoped the invasion would be postponed until the ensuing year, when the influx of emigrants would furnish men enough to meet the enemy in the field. Under this supposition some of the people grew incautious; and among them were Boone's daughter Mary, Sue Calloway, and Julia, who, becoming intimate associates as soon as they met, were afterward inseparable companions. They explored every hill and valley in the neighbourhood. And at dusky eve, when the men ceased to garner the corn, and, guided by the sound of their bells, sought the cows and horses among the cane, and drove them within the fort, the three girls loved to linger, striving, but in vain, to find the mysterious whippoorwill that filled the valley with its wailing.

One evening, just at the first glimmer of twilight, when the owl came flapping down from the hills and the whippoorwill was uttering its first

lamentation, the three girls were still lingering on the margin of the river.

"Come, Mary," said Sue Calloway, "don't you hear the bells? They are driving in the cows and horses, and will soon be looking for us."

"Don't fear it, Sue," said the daughter of Boone; "they will not miss us—I mean you and I. Julia, though, is always looked for and watched over by the handsome bird of prey."

"Bird of prey?" continued Sue, seeing Julia plunged in one of her spells of musing abstraction.

"Yes; don't you remember father says they called him White Eagle?"

"Oh, yes! I forgot. And we poor neglected creatures may wail with the whippoorwill," she added, with a sigh.

"Simon Kenton," whispered Mary, while the other blushed, and turned aside her face, "says he loves the song of the dusky bird, and knows where it perches when singing."

"Eagle!" said Julia, roused suddenly from her reverie. "Did you not say something about the eagle?"

"Yes,—a *white* eagle," replied Mary.

"You mean Charles. You need not smile. You cannot annoy me by alluding to him."

"We would not annoy you if we could," said Mary. "We merely desired to rouse you. You seemed unconscious of the lateness of the hour."

"But see!" exclaimed Julia; "the hills opposite are tinged with the silver light of the moon before we can behold the disk of the orb. You know we cannot see it rise from the fort. Go in, if you will not stay with me, and I will follow presently."

The girls did as she requested, and left her standing under a hawthorn-tree. They had become accustomed to Julia's little eccentricities, which they attributed solely to the delightful influence of love.

Julia waited the rising of the moon, which seemed to beam on her pale forehead as a light from her distant home; and she smiled as she gazed at the joyful messenger from the East. Then turning into the little path leading through the clustering vines and bushes toward the gate of the fort, she was startled by the rustling of dry leaves in her immediate vicinity, and paused to listen. To her dismay and horror, a tall Indian, of herculean frame rose and stood before her. She did not cry out, but her heart throbbed audibly.

"Fear not. I am a friend," said the Indian in very good English.

"Who are you? What do you want?" asked the trembling girl, quickly, and glancing hastily round, as if in quest of some avenue of escape. But there was none.

"I am one who will do you no ill. I want a few brief words with you, and then you may go to your friends. You have heard the White Eagle say his brother Thayendanegea was incapable of lying. I am Thayendanegea."

Julia breathed more freely. She was aware that the savages often professed friendship when they meant harm; but it was not so with the great sachem of the Six Nations.

"Speak on; I am listening," said she.

"[illegible]," said the chief, making a stride toward the shrinking girl, and

gently taking her unresisting hand, "promise that you will not make known my presence in this vicinity. On that condition you have my word that you shall return to your friends unharmed by me—if you desire it."

"If I desire it? But I promise. Now be quick!" said she.

"Yes, if you desire it. I am now a king. If you will go with me,—voluntarily, I mean,—you shall be my bride, my queen, and I will love you during the whole of my life. My sister loves the young companion of her infancy, and mourns over his desertion. Let him marry her, we will seek a retreat where the white man cannot come, and be happy. The tomahawk shall be buried. We will live in peace. Thousands of innocent lives will be spared. The Great Spirit you worship will smile on you——"

"Impossible!" said Julia, in tears.

"It is the last offer!" continued Brandt. "Another moon, and it will be too late. The tribes of every nation are rousing, and, when the hatchet is sharpened and the war-paths are trodden, neither orators nor sachems will be able to withhold the sinewy arms of the warriors. The Mohawks love their white brother, and their king loves the white maiden. Speak! But think of the benefits you may confer, or the sufferings entail on your fellow-creatures."

"O, Brandt, it is impossible!"

"Go, then!"

"Oh, tell me," she said, pausing in her flight, "where your sister is, and if she reproaches us."

"She complains not—reproaches not—but loves on. She would die, if she were not a Christian and did not fear to offend her God."

"Bless her! O, Thayendanegea, tell her I love her dearly! But say her sister fears her, too—or else she would have her always near——"

"Brandt would slay her first! Say no more! Farewell. Breathe to no one what has passed this night. And yet, Julia," he continued, in faltering and softened tones, "you may reveal it to Charles. If he will promise not to seek me during the next twelve hours, in the event of rejecting my offer."

And before the girl could reply the chief vanished; and, when she turned her face again in the direction of the fort, she saw Mary and Sue approaching with hurried steps.

"The moon is half an hour high," said Mary, "and yet you tarry."

"I've heard of people being moonstruck," said Sue. And then seeing Julia pale and distressed, she took her hand tenderly and asked her forgiveness.

"There is nothing to forgive, Sue," said Julia, returning the caress. "You did not mean to offend me. That is sufficient."

"But why are you so cold and pale?" asked Mary.

"Am I?" was all the response Julia vouchsafed.

"Yes, truly. And I am sure you have seen something which has terrified you."

"Seen something?"

"A ghost, perhaps," said Sue. "It was not an Indian, or she would not have remained here alone; nor a lover, for he is in the fort seeking her."

A sad smile was all this sally produced. And then they entered the gate.

"You have been weeping," said Charles, late in the evening, observing Julia's abstractions while the rest were singing merry songs.

"And for what, pray?" replied she, with a faint smile.

"I know not, unless it be to return. But why should you seek to hide your grief? That is the mystery."

"It is a mystery and a secret," said the girl, her face assuming a deathlike paleness, "which I cannot reveal until you have first promised not to betray it to others."

"I cannot conceive the necessity. But I promise."

Then she related in a low tone what she had seen and listened to. Charles became very pale, and long remained silent.

"And you told him it was impossible?"

"Can you doubt it?"

"Certainly not, when you say so. But here is Skippie, who has been invisible for several days."

"Skippie," enquired Charles, gazing at the imperturbable features of the mysterious messenger, "how did you get in?"

"Over!" said he, his gestures indicating that he entered over the roof without being seen by the sentinels.

"Well?"

"Going," said he, pointing eastward.

"When?"

"Morning."

"He will take any letters we may write, Julia," said Charles.

Skippie nodded assent.

Charles returned to his room to prepare his letters, and Julia likewise hastened to perform her task. And it may be remarked that, as our narrative is partly founded on these documents, they were faithfully delivered by Skippie.

CHAPTER XI.

After the appearance of Brandt, Charles, accompanied by such of his party as were disposed to go with him, made several excursions round the fort, always ending at the river. But no traces of the Indians were discovered, and he concluded his forest brother must have come alone, crossing and recrossing the river at the fort.

After this the vigilance of the people relaxed again, and the girls resumed their twilight rambles, forgetting that, although no savages might be within sixty miles of them at one noon, numbers could arrive before the next.

"Come, Paddy," said Simon Kenton, about this time, "let's go and see after the horses." It had been their custom to count them three times every day, and to collect the stragglers.

"'Faith, and I don't see the use of it," said the reluctant Paddy, who, although accustomed to taking care of horses in comfortable stables, never approached them in the cane without fear and trembling.

"The use of it? Don't we find some of them fast in the vines almost

every day? There are no Indians about; but still they require looking after. I will go alone, if you prefer working in the field."

But Paddy did not prefer any such labour, knowing that, if he should be suddenly assailed by the Indians while working in the field, he would be quite as liable to injury as when among the horses with a gun in his hand.

So the two sallied forth, and were soon counting the horses, which crowded around them for their accustomed salt.

"Hello!" cried Kenton, gazing about wildly, "where's Dan?" This was the name of his favourite steed.

"Sure enough, where is he?" said Paddy. "And I'd like you to tell me who's here to answer a question the likes o' that? The dumb brutes can't talk in our language, and Paddy knows jist about as much as yerself, Mr Kenton."

"All the rest are here," continued Kenton. "It's strange! Dan is generally the first to lick my hand."

"And who knows if a painter hasn't caught him? They say thim carniferous varmints always choose the best. If there's a tinder woman about, they'll niver gnaw the bones of a man. And it's dacent in 'em to spare us who are bound to go out in the wild woods and cane-brakes. And what is it ye're listening to, Misther Kenton?"

Simon had stepped apart and stooped down in a listening attitude.

"All right, Paddy," said he, rising erect again, the dark cloud gone from his brow. "I heard Dan's Bell. But it's a long way off, down the river."

"And is he not a sinsible horse? He's promenading betwixt the stations, guarding and protecting the forts. He's a jewel of a baste, and good for his weight in goold. If we stay here a while he'll come to us, and so we naadn't budge afther him."

But this mode of reasoning did not satisfy Kenton. He insisted that something very unusual had caused the separation of his best and gentlest animal from the rest. Indeed, the whole drove were in the habit of following Dan's bell, and he must hasten to see what had happened. In reply to Paddy's objections to going with him, he merely said if any Indians were prowling about the greatest danger would be in the immediate vicinity of the fort. And, if Paddy's argument failed to convince Kenton, Kenton's hint was not thrown away on Paddy, and so they set out together down the river.

"Hush, Paddy!" said Kenton, again placing his ear near the ground. "I've lost the bell!"

And what betther could ye expict in sich a place as this? And if you iver find it agin it'll not be worth the stooping for."

"There it is!" cried Kenton, smiling. "I hear it now. But we must get out of this. It is over yonder in the woods. Dan must have moved since we started."

"I'm much obleeged to him. And sure he's a sinsible horse to lade us out of these purgatorious brambles. But, upon me sowl, I haven't yit heard the first tankle of his bell!"

"You have not lived in the forest, Paddy," said Kenton, leading the way into the tall sumachs, where their progress would be less obstructed.

"That is thrue," said Paddy; houses were made for men to live in, the wild woods for wild animals and blackguard savages. Yit, Misther

Kenton, I have as many ears and as good ones as any person, and now I hear Dan's bell. I did not listen afore."

Paddy followed his companion several minutes in silence, and until Kenton paused abruptly, his lips slightly parted and his rifle half in readiness to fire.

"And what're ye frowning about now?" asked Paddy; "any child can hear the bell without stooping down till the falthy ground."

"Hush!" said Kenton, in a low voice. "Sit down here with me, and don't speak above a whisper."

"Not speak above a whasper! For fear, I suppose, the horse'll hear us and run away?"

"Fool!"

"Did you mane that for me, Misther Kenton?"

"Be quiet if you don't want to lose your scalp!"

"Och, I beg your pardon, misther! And there are Indians about, sure enough, thin?"

"I think so."

"And how could any one want to lose his scalp? You oughtn't to name any sich thing! I'll go back!"

"I wish you *were* in the fort! Could you find the way back yourself?"

"Niver! My head's been turned and twisted so I wouldn't know which way to start. Won't you go wid me?"

And lose *his* scalp? No, indeed! That fellow's hair shall be dangling from my belt when I go in, or my name's not Simon Kenton! Poor Dan's gone—that's certain!"

"Won't you explain all this to me, Misther Kenton? I can't understand a jot of it."

"The yallar rascal's stolen my horse, and thinks he is sure of my scalp into the bargain. Didn't you hear that?"

"The bell, ye mane? Of course?"

"Well, are there any flies at this season?"

"No, not that I knows off. But there's abundance of flaas in the garrison."

"That bell is not shaken by Dan. It is in the hand of an Indian!"

"Let's begone, Misther Kenton! Let's give the alarm to the paple. Run as fast as ye plase, and I'll kape up wid ye!"

"Hush! Be quiet! I will take that yeller rascal's scalp in with me, or Sue Calloway and Simon Kenton will never be man and wife! I place my hand on this log and swear to it. Paddy you must do precisely what I tell you, or creep back to the fort alone! When you hear my gun, jump up and fire off your gun—load and fire as fast as you can—beat the bushes, yell, talk Irish, and make 'em believe—that is, if any more of 'em are about—at least twenty men are coming. Now hide yourself!"

Paddy, knowing he could never find the way back to the station without a guide, was under the necessity of obeying. Then Kenton rose up and uttered a prolonged and not unmusical halloo, as he was in the habit of doing to attract the ear of his horse, which had, like most other horses, learned to know the voice of his master. Immediately after, the bell was shaken quite loudly, in imitation of the rattle made by a [illegible] suddenly lifting his head.

Kenton smiled, and glided away in a different direction from that whence the sound of the bell proceeded, making a wide circuit, so as to attain the opposite side of the locality of the bell. He knew every inch of the ground, and was aware that the Indian was posted in a dense grove of sugar-maples, some forty yards from the thicket of sumachs in the midst of which Paddy was ensconced, and precisely in front of the deer-path leading through it into the woods; and he was satisfied the face of the foe would be kept steadily in that direction. Hence his motive for the loud halloo before executing his project of circumvention.

No cat ever moved with less noise than Kenton in the execution of his well-conceived purpose. And so far was he from experiencing any trepidation, that more than once he was under the necessity of pausing to repress an inclination to laugh at the anticipated astonishment of the Indian and the ludicrous picture his fancy painted of a savage watching in readiness to shoot him as he emerged from the sumachs, when he should be aiming at the back of the Indian's head from the opposite direction.

And there was an instinctive prescience in his conception. For when he approached the designated point, without the crush of a leaf or the disturbance of a bough, he beheld the Indian, with a bell in his hand and a companion at his side, sitting on the fallen trunk of a tree which Kenton himself had cut down to capture a bear.

The Indians were laughing silently at the anticipated success of their stratagem, and expressing by mimicry the amazement they had no doubt their victim would exhibit when, instead of seeing his horse, he should find himself a prisoner or hear the whistling of their balls before he could present his own rifle.

Kenton paused and surveyed them when about forty paces distant. Their faces were steadily turned toward the place where the path entered the woods; and they were so near it they could have heard the approach of the horse-hunter before he came in view. Their position on that side was sufficiently obscured by the intervening trees to render any extraordinary precaution unnecessary.

But they were exposed on the other side; and Kenton was determined they should hear from him, if they did not see him, although he was a little embarrassed by the presence of one more than he had calculated upon. Shifting his position several times for the purpose of getting their heads in a line, so as to perforate them both, several minutes were fruitlessly expended; for, from the shape of the fallen trunk and the inequality in the height of the Indians, the project was impracticable.

He poured out a charge of powder in his buckhorn tube and placed it beside a bullet at the root of the tree behind which he was standing, so that he might be in readiness to repeat his fire before the surviving enemy could rush upon him. Then, taking a deliberate aim at the one with the bell, whom he recognised as the noted chief, Ground-Hog, and the original owner of the horse Dan, he fired. The bell and Indian fell together. The other Indian sprang up astounded, and, after glancing hurriedly in every direction but the right one, prostrated himself beside his weltering companion, as if to elude the aim of an enemy.

Kenton, meanwhile, lost no time in recharging his rifle; and the surviving Indian, finding himself not assaulted, and not knowing where the foe might be concealed hastened to make his escape. But, as is almost

invariably the case, he determined to bear off his dead comrade. So, being a broad-shouldered, stalwart fellow, he rose with his neck between the dead one's legs, the feet in front and the body behind, back to back; and with his burden he ran through the woods, continually turning to shield himself from the aim of any foe that might be watching by interposing the dead Indian.

So skilful were his manœuvres that Kenton was finally under the necessity of firing *through* the dead body to reach the living Indian. And this he did effectually, for they both lay prostrate a moment after the discharge of his rifle. He ran up and scalped them, despatching the last victim, who had been only desperately wounded, with his tomahawk.

No sooner was this bloody work accomplished than Dan was discovered a few paces distant, behind the roots of an immense fallen tree. Thither the savage was bearing his companion, and would have soon effected his escape. Kenton threw his arms round the neck of his snorting steed in a loving embrace, and then, mounting him, dashed into the sumach-thicket where Paddy lay concealed.

"Paddy! Paddy! Where are you?" cried Kenton, his horse standing with his neck arched over the log where Paddy had buried himself.

"And is it yerself who asks?" replied Paddy, in a tremulous voice, and at the same time springing up from the leaves,—an apparition which frightened Dan, and Kenton was near being thrown.

"Yes. Why didn't you answer me at first?"

"And how could I know it was yerself till ye towld me? Murther! murther! I see the nasty scalps hanging to yer belt!"

"Two of 'em, Paddy! So Sue Calloway and I may be man and wife after all. But why didn't you fire and shout as I told you?"

"Now come, Misther Kenton, how could I tell they wasn't running this way, right over a body!"

"Well, suppose they had? Wouldn't you have 'em come where you could see 'em?"

"Och, murther! they might have kilt me, and Paddy, sure, would niver have enjoyed the smiles of any darlint wife."

"But there would have been no danger. Your firing and shouting would have frightened them away."

"D'ye say that? And, sure enough, there'd be no danger? Then here goes for a specimen of the noise I can make in a case of needcissity!" And he sprang upon the log and fired his gun, and yelled, and howled, and beat and twisted the bushes, to such a furious extent that Kenton, half dead with laughter, was forced to alight from his amazed horse to keep from being thrown.

"Are you mad?" cried Kenton.

"Mad, is it? As blazes!" said Paddy, firing off his gun again. "Am I not fighting the Indians?"

"You are making a fool of yourself; and if there are any more in hearing they'll soon put a stop to your howling. That's not the noise a brave man makes, and I'll leave you!"

"Misther Kenton! Misther Kenton!" cried Paddy, instantly sobered, "ye are the bravest and the best man in the world, and I will tell iverybody of yer great dades this day. And sure, now, ye'll let me ride behint ye?"

Kenton could not resist the flattery; and, after some difficulty, Dan permitted Paddy to occupy a seat on his strong back; but there was no more Irish howling.

Kenton, when approaching the station, uttered the horse-halloo, a sort of whinnying yell used by the scouts to denote their success in the acquisition of horses. He listened in vain for a response. All seemed to be silent. Astonished and somewhat chagrined at this, he sounded the startling scalp-halloo. This never failed to produce a prodigious excitement among Indians or borderers. But on that occasion, and to the amazement of Kenton, only one or two responsive voices were heard; and when he dashed through the gate there was no enthusiastic crowds to receive him with plaudits.

Boone approached and examined the scalps in grave silence. MacSwine sat apart with a dark cloud on his brow. Van Wiggens was still, staring at his dog, and "Vatch" himself stood like a marble quadruped, his blunt tail sticking up immovably. The voice of Mr Jones was heard in the large cabin where he usually preached. He was praying fiercely. Maledictions were uttered and vengeance invoked.

"Oh, Mr Kenton," exclaimed Mrs Calloway, rushing out into the area, her long hair streaming loosely behind, "they've got her?"

"Got who? who's got? what's what?" cried Kenton, quickly, trembling from head to foot, and almost unnerved by the indefinable apprehensions which oppressed him, intensified by the singular change in the countenances of all, and the disordered hair and tearful eyes of the woman.

"Sue! the Indians have got Sue!" she screamed; and then fell prostrate at the feet of the scout, whose breathing was quick and oppressive.

"Oh, ——them!" cried Kenton, in a shrill voice, which rang throughout the building.

"Yes, tam dem!" said Van Wiggens.

"Vatch" barked fiercely.

"Come! come!" cried Charles rushing into the area full-armed, and habited as an Indian. "We want ten men—the best in the station—all volunteers—to go in pursuit. Boone and I will lead."

Then Kenton, as if his sinews, which had been apparently paralyzed, were suddenly enfranchised from the spell that bound them, sprang up in the air, and, striking his feet together several times before descending, crowed vociferously, like a cock.

"I knew you'd be one, Simon," said Boone.

"*One!* and Sue gone?—I'll be SIX!" and letting his rifle fall gently to the earth, he struck the palm of his left hand a violent blow with the fist of his right.

"Mary's gone too!" said Boone in a husky voice.

"O Lord!" said Kenton; "and I was after Dan, and didn't know it! But we'll foller 'em to the other end of the creation! They've roused a hornets' nest now! I feel as strong as a buffalo bull! I could bite off the head of a nail! I could—"

"And Julia!" said Charles—they've taken her too!"

"That clips my tongue!" said Kenton, striding in front of Charles and gazing steadfastly in his face. "I'm dumb now. I can't curse a bit. I feel like having the lock-jaw. My arms ache! I could bust

a rock with my first! I'd agree to strip and fight ten Indians at once. They might have their tomahawks; all I'd ask would be my knuckles and my teeth! Why are we standing here like scared turkeys that don't know which way to fly? Don't let us burn daylight, or moonlight either. Where's the volunteers? I'm six!"

The number designated, after such a speech from Kenton, were in instant readiness; and the most extraordinary thing was the persistence of Paddy in his resolution to accompany them. He said if the girls were not recovered he didn't care to keep his "sculp."

The three girls had been seized by a party of Indians near the spring, on the river-bank, just after Kenton and Paddy departed in quest of the horses. They had crossed the river in the night in a canoe, which they concealed in the bushes near the water, and then hid themselves in the vicinity. The seizure of the girls was followed so quickly by the pushing off of the canoe that, by the time their screams had roused the men in the fields, they had been conveyed to the opposite shore of the river. Their captors were only four in number; but on the northern bank they were joined by ten others. They hastened away toward the Ohio, but rather in a northwest course than in the line the fugitives had traversed from the Scioto.

The girls were placed on Indian ponies, while most of their captors ran on foot. Kenton had diminished the number of horses in the Indian country.

Julia looked round, expecting to see Brandt; but he was not present; nor were any Mohawks among them. All were Senecas.

They had not proceeded far before they were met by Peter Shaver, on his jackass, whom the Indians abused for lagging behind. Peter had been a volunteer in the expedition, breathing vengeance against the whites, but determined, at the first opportunity, to desert them; and it was to prevent such an occurrence, perhaps, that he was required to retain his ass, which could not be beaten out of his slow gait nor easily made to abandon the scenes and society to which it had so long been accustomed; and, besides, the chief "Popcorn" afforded a fund of amusement which the Indians enjoyed most heartily, and no doubt Peter's life had been spared that he might continue to be the laughing-stock of the savage warriors.

"You know the jack can't keep up," said Peter, in deprecation of their reproaches.

"You be dern!" said the leader.

Just then the ass, snuffing the breeze which blew from the south, and upon which was borne the scent of the blood of the Indians slain by Kenton, began to bray.

"Dern! stop him!" cried the leader of the party, who drew his knife and threatened to cut the animal's throat.

"Wait till I get down!" said Peter, not at all reluctant to be rid of his ass. "Now, cut away as soon as you please," said he, when dismounted.

This produced some laughing when the Indians comprehended the reason of Popcorn's willingness to sacrifice his long-eared steed; and, therefore, the animal's life was spared. But they choked him into silence, and, turning his head back, whipped him along the path, in the rear of the ponies.

Then ensued an animated conversation among the Indians, in their own dialect, some portions of which Julia was enabled to understand. They were discussing the probable result of the pursuit they anticipated, —the number of pursuers, and how many would be left to defend the station. From this Julia inferred the object was to weaken the garrison.

Mary and Sue, though seemingly quiet and subdued, had not forgotten the lessons learned in the wilderness, repeated at many a glowing fireside. They broke off small boughs from the bushes, and strewed fragments of their handkerchiefs, and threads drawn from their clothing, in the path they were traversing.

This operation was seen and understood by the leading chief; and he did not forbid it until they reached the head waters of the South Fork of Licking River, near where Mount Sterling stands. Here every effort was made to conceal their trail. The girls were threatened with the torture if they did not cease to scatter threads and twigs on the ground.

Daylight was fading, and the shimmering stars appeared in the east; and, although the girls were both weary and hungry, their captors paid no attention to their alleged wants. On the contrary, they were forced to ride among the slippery rocks in the midst of the stream, then exceedingly low, as there had been a prolonged drought. The Indians, sure of foot and reckless of exposure, followed. The ass was sometimes urged forward by blows behind, or dragged along by the ears. In this manner they proceeded several miles, leaving, as they thought, no trace behind them. But the Indians were outwitted by the girls, as many wiser men had been before them. In the dusky shades of the clustering boughs, the Senecas could not prevent their captives from detaching some of their long silken hair, and hanging it on the willows.

Their progress was now very slow, and it seemed they had no intention of flying far. The object was to confuse their pursuers. The girls were dismounted when the water became deeper. The ponies and the ass were taken to the opposite side, and driven down the right hand bank of the stream, while the captives were conducted along a path on the other side, which soon diverged from the river, and led into the hills.

It was a well-beaten path, and quite dusty. The girls were ordered to keep in the centre of it, and follow their leader in single file. Behind, an old Indian brought up the rear, obliterating the foot-prints with a bough of cedar, and leaving no traces but his own moccasin-tracks.

They travelled thus until, from the height of the moon, the girls supposed it to be near midnight, when they again struck the river, which had increased in width and volume. They descended the bluff and halted in a beech-bottom, near the mouth of a small rivulet that emptied into the larger stream. And here they were surprised to find the ponies, the ass, and the Indians who had separated from them several miles back.

The poor girls, supposing they would be compelled to mount again and pursue the journey all night, were ready to despair. They feared it would be impossible for their friends to follow. But no indignities were offered them, which, at least, was an assurance that their lives would be spared. The Indian never insults his female prisoner unless

he means to kill her afterward. And Peter Shaver had several times made encouraging winks and gestures.

The girls were not required to mount the ponies again that night. A fire was kindled under a rude shelter hastily constructed, and some buffalo-tongue, sliced and broiled, sufficed for their supper.

Not fearing their captives would attempt an escape, the Indians returned upon their trail for the purpose of more effectually destroying it. Peter, known to be incapable of finding his way in any direction in the absence of a beaten path, was left to keep the fire replenished.

It was during this temporary withdrawal of the savages that Julia learned from Peter that their seizure was to be attributed to Queen Esther, and that Brandt had nothing whatever to do with it. On the contrary, the great sachem had returned, silent and terrible in his gloom, from a solitary excursion, and, leading his people toward the East, announced his intention to strike his tomahawk into the heads of the white people living nearest to the Eastern lakes. His aunt, Gentle Moonlight, and sister, Brown Thrush, were still remaining at Chilicothe when Peter left the village; and Calvin likewise remained, and had been promised the hand of the beautiful Indian girl provided he would head the Delawares who had just joined the confederacy of the Six Nations. To this, however, he objected; and Gentle Moonlight did not sanction the project. The forest maiden was silent, knowing her aunt could dispose of her as she pleased. But she sang continually of the White Eagle, and her thoughts and dreams were of the woods, and streams, and flowers, beyond the grave.

When their captors returned, the girls were ordered to occupy a small space in the crotch of a fallen tree near the fire. Leaves sufficed for a couch, and a buffalo robe for a shelter from the dew or frost. They kept themselves warm by clinging together under their weighty coverlet, and endeavoured to cheer each other with such prospects of a speedy rescue as the circumstances afforded. Their whispers were at last hushed in slumber, for the idea of escape, unassisted by their friends, never occurred to them. In the morning, after a slight repast, the journey was resumed; and the Indians were merry with the conviction that they had effectually concealed their trail.

Their progress the second day was neither rapid nor in the most direct course for the Ohio River; and it became evident that the Indians looked for the arrival of friends who would be interposed between their captives and the stations of the white men. Being out of meat, several of the warriors diverged from the path in quest of deer, and their rifles were soon heard in various directions. This convinced Mary Boone that they no longer feared pursuit; but it did not quite extinguish her hope.

In the evening they encamped at an early hour, having recrossed the Licking. The place where they rested was at the mouth of a creek emptying into the river, known since by the name of Indian Creek, about a mile from Cynthiana. It was a narrow bottom, overgrown with beech-trees, and a position well adapted for defence. And here the girls found a better shelter than that of the preceding night. It seemed to have been an ancient camping-ground, for old forks were standing

Leaving Peter with the girls, the Indians dispersed in various directions, to be satisfied, as usual, that no enemy lurked in the vicinity.

Peter amused himself firing at the ducks that pitched into the mouth of the creek, that being a famous place for them to collect of evenings; and, finding a canoe in the vicinity, he obtained his victims without difficulty. And Mary and Sue undertook to dress and roast them. This was done much to the satisfaction of the Indians, who partook heartily of the fowls, and praised the girls for their skill in cooking.

At night the repose of the captives was disturbed by the howling of wolves, which seemed to have collected in great numbers in the vicinity; and occasionally their glaring eyeballs, as they stood on the opposite side of the creek and gazed at the fire, were plainly discernible.

"I guess I can blot out one of their eyes," said Peter, raising his gun to his shoulder.

"Totem!—Seneca Totem!" cried the leader of the Indians, striking up the muzzle of the rifle; and the ball whistled over the tree-tops.

"I beg pardon," said Peter; "I forgot the wolves were your brothers, and that I was connected with the same respectable family."

The Indians comprehended his speech in part, but did not attach any importance to the jest. But they attached a superstitious signification to the presence of the wolves, or to their mode of howling on that particular night. They were even kind enough to throw the fragments of their feast to them, but this did not silence their cries.

Julia, unable to sleep, drew from Peter an account of his experience among the Indians.

"Hush!" said Mary, in a low voice.

"What do you hear?" asked Julia.

"Lie down, Peter!" whispered Mary; then, turning to Julia, said her eye had caught a signal from her father.

"I saw nothing," said Julia.

"There it is again!" said Mary, pointing to an acorn that fell near the fire and rolled at their feet.

"That is an acorn," said Julia.

"I know it," responded the other. But we are not under an oak-tree."

"If it be your father, why cannot I see him?" asked Julia, rising softly and gazing round. "No," she continued, "there are no bushes here to hide any one. I fear you are mistaken."

"I am not! The signal is for us to lie down, so as not to be in the way of their bullets."

Julia involuntarily clung closer to her companions, and Peter himself seemed inclined to maintain a more intimate proximity to the girls than, under other circumstances, would have been permitted.

"How quietly the Indians sleep!" whispered Julia.

"They always do," said Mary; "and we must not move or speak above a whisper, whatever we may hear or see, until bidden by my father. The Indians will not have time to kill us, and we must not be afraid."

Soon after, their deliverers were seen to glide from behind the trees and stand with their guns pointing at the Indians. But the heads of the girls, as they peered over the crotch of the fallen tree, were between

the rifles and the sleeping savages. Boone, by an emphatic gesture, commanded them to lie down and be still, which they obeyed instinctively. The next moment a deadly volley was fired into the midst of the unconscious savages, and such as escaped the fatal lead sprang up, yelling horribly, and disappeared in the forest.

The girls rushed into the arms of their deliverers; and Sue Calloway was embraced, and lifted up, and kissed by Kenton.

"Sue!" said he, "I'd wade through fire forty feet deep to save you!" Sue said nothing, nor opened her eyes, her face reclining on her deliverer's shoulder.

And Julia clung to Charles, while Mary wept with joy on the breast of her father.

"Be me sowl, I'm hungry!" said Paddy; "and here the savage blackguards have been having a fayst to thimselves! And what do ye call that same noise?" he continued, arresting his hand as it was conveying the half of a roasted duck to his mouth.

It was the warwhoop of the rallied Senecas, and a moment after their balls rattled like hail about the fire; but none of the party were killed, and only two were slightly wounded. Boone and Charles deposited the girls in a place of security, and ordered the men to post themselves behind the trees out of the light of the fire. This was done immediately, and a desultory conflict was kept up until early dawn, when the Indians retired into the wilderness beyond the creek.

When the gray morning appeared, Boone discovered a slaughtered deer which the Indians had hung upon a tree beyond the reach of the wolves; and this sufficed for breakfast.

Without loss of time, the party set out on their return to the station. Kenton had found the ponies, which the Indians left behind. But neither Peter Shaver nor his ass could be seen; and it was supposed he had been recaptured by the Indians.

Although the loss of Peter was naturally regretted, yet the party had been too successful to mourn a great deal over his fate, whatever it might be; and the joy of the enfranchised girls was a sufficient recompense for their fatigues and perils.

Toward evening, and after a pretty good day's travel, the party were surprised to perceive signs of a large party of Indians, which had passed southward within the last twenty-four hours. This discovery was, perhaps, a very fortunate one. They might but for it have encamped upon such ground as would have made their fire visible to the enemy; but now instead of this, they resolved to push forward and cross the river without halting. This they effected before midnight; and their arrival at the station was the occasion of general rejoicing and of thanksgiving by the Rev. Mr Jones.

CHAPTER XII.

RUNNERS arrived the next day from Hoy's, Byrant's, Logan's, and Harrod's stations, with the startling intelligence that Indians had been seen in their respective vicinities. From the simultaneous appearance of the enemy in different places, it was inferred that all the forts were to be attacked at once, and, if possible, demolished at a blow.

Preparations were made to repel any assault, and to withstand a siege. The grain was gathered, and all the stock confined within the hollow square of cabins.

Nor had these measures been taken a moment too soon; for, the day afterward, the enemy appeared in considerable force on the south side of the river, and surrounded the station. They consisted principally of Indians,—Wyandots, Shawnees, and Western Delawares; a small party of British from Canada, commanded by Duquesne; and some half a dozen renegade Americans, among whom were the Girtys.

Duquesne desired a parley, and professed to have been charged by Governor Hamilton to offer such terms as could be honourably accepted by the settlers. But their treacherous purpose was soon discovered.

From that moment the deadly strife began. On all sides the fort was assailed, for it was surrounded completely. But the fatal aim of Kenton, MacSwine, and others, stretched so many of the savages on the plain that they were compelled, despite of Duquesne's orders, to fall back and seek shelter behind the trees and under the protecting bank of the river.

At night the assault was renewed, and the besieged had to fire at the flash of the enemy's guns. The night was dark, the sky overcast with clouds; and the blazing arrows whizzing through the air, the continued fire of rifles without, in a crescent form, extending half-way round the fort, and, within, radiating outward to the enemy, formed a grand and terrific spectacle.

The females moulded bullets for their defenders and carried them food, so that they might not be under the necessity of abandoning their posts; and a certain number of the men, who were not expert with the rifle, or unpractised in shooting "at the flash," as it was called, were detailed for the purpose of watching the blazing arrows, and extinguishing the roofs and sides of the cabins when ignited. Among these Paddy had been placed, much against his will, for he greatly preferred peering through a small loophole to exposing his person thus on the huts.

"And, now, Mr Boone," said he, leaping down, "I naadn't stay up there any more, for all the water's spilt."

Boone long remained silent. His great error—indeed the only error he had committed in the location of his fort—was now painfully apparent. The spring was some distance above, and in possession of the enemy! The stock of water, as Paddy said, was exhausted!

"Fill your buckets with the damp earth!" the pioneer exclaimed; "and if that gives out you must roll upon the fire and smother it with your hands. If one cabin burns, all must go, and every one of us will be scalped!"

Paddy rushed back to his post, pale and desperate. He thought it better to be shot than burned; but he kept as much as possible in the lee of the apex of the roofs.

So far, only two of the garrison had fallen; but the enemy suffered severely, and the death-halloo was heard continually, as Boone, or Kenton, or MacSwine, fired "at the flash," an achievement hitherto unattained by the Indians. At first they believed their warriors were accidently stricken; but it could not long escape their observation that they always received the fatal wound in the head, and most generally in the eye, and when in the act of firing themselves. This discovery in-

duced them to observe greater caution, and not to fire more than once or twice from the same position.

Towards morning a smart shower fell, much to the relief of the garrison. The besiegers ceased firing, and it was believed by some they had abandoned the attempt to reduce the fort. This illusion, however, was soon dispelled. For, early in the morning, Kenton, stuffing his buckskin coat with straw and surmounting it with his cap, pushed the effigy through an orifice in the roof. It represented one looking out boldly on a field supposed to be deserted by the enemy. In an instant several sharp reports were heard, and, Kenton making the man of straw fall back in imitation of one fatally wounded, a yell of savage exultation was uttered.

"Look at that, Sue!" said Kenton, pointing to the perforations in his garment.

"I'll mend it for you, Simon," said she.

"Yes, you'll mend my coat, but you don't care for the wound under my vest."

"That was not done by a savage," said Mary, smiling composedly, being familiar with such scenes.

"A savage could not be more unfeeling," said Kenton. Then, listening to the reiterated shouts without, he continued, "The yellow rascals know my coat, and are rejoicing over my death. You see, Sue, what a great man I am in their opinion. They count me six, and I *am* SIX in any common crowd! But won't I astonish 'em when they see me the next time?"

They were interrupted by the entrance of Boone and Charles, with excited countenances.

"Oh, what is the matter now?" asked Julia.

"Be not alarmed, Julia," said Charles, taking her cold hand. "We shall defeat them yet. Boone has conceived a plan which will frustrate the purpose of Duquesne and Girty."

"What purpose do you allude to?"

"Have you not seen how turbid the river has become?"

"Yes. It has been observed by all. Was it not caused by the rain?"

"Look at the stream above the spring."

Julia did so, and perceived it was clear, and then exclaimed, "They are mining! They will burst up the ground and appear in our midst!"

"No! be the powers, no!" cried Paddy, springing up. "And is it undermining us they're afther? Let Paddy alone for countermining 'em. He'll be in his ilement with the spade. Misther Boone, if you'll give me a spade, I'll do the sarvice of three men. I'll give the yaller blackguards a lesson in the art o' digging!"

Boone smiled, and said, if Paddy and a few others would work with expedition the danger would soon disappear. And Paddy performed wonders with the spade,—his natural implement. But again great distress was felt for the want of water, which, however, was never suspected by Duquesne, who doubted not a well had been dug in the fort.

Another shower fell during the day, and revived the spirits of the besieged; and toward evening, from the accumulation of earth thrown up by Paddy and his co-labourers, the Scots, the enemy, perceiving their design had been counteracted, abandoned the attempt to effect a

subterranean passage. They re-commenced firing from several points, and manœuvring in such a manner as seemed likely to produce a sally from the garrison. Once, for the purpose of inducing the whites to come forth, they affected to be panic-stricken, and in full retreat on one side, while on the other, all was silent and still, as if no foe lurked in the vicinity.

It was in vain. Boone and Charles understood their purpose, and succeeded for a long time in restraining the more impetuous and less experienced of their friends from pursuing the enemy.

There was one man, however, more intractable than the rest, named McGary, who swore that half the men were cowards; and, late in the day, when the foes made a final effort to draw them out on the east, McGary, in disregard of the urgent remonstrances of Boone, issued forth, followed by a few others, and charged the savages. Instantly, as had been apprehended, the main body of Indians sprang up from the place of their concealment on the west, and made desperate efforts both to storm the garrison and to intercept the sallying party. They reached the gate of the enclosure, which they hacked with their tomahawks. In several places they succeeded in setting fire to the cabins, while a detachment, led by Girty, got between McGary and the station.

Boiling rain-water and molten lead were contributed by the women to aid in repelling the attack, and the fire was extinguished, and the assailants hurled back with loss. But the situation of McGary and his men became desperate.

Driven from the gates and the cabins, the main body of the enemy were soon concentrated near the spring, and kept up an incessant firing on the men who had inconsiderately left the defences, and were now endeavouring to fight their way back to the friendly shelter.

McGary's men at length concealed themselves in a "sinkhole,"—a funnel-shaped depression in the earth often met with in Kentucky,—about ninety paces distant from the fort, but not more than forty from the spring. From this position they returned the fire of the enemy at the embankment of the river, but were liable at any moment to be assailed from an opposite direction by the decoying savages they had gone in pursuit of.

"There!" exclaimed Boone, listening intently, "they are doomed unless we save them! Girty is coming on the other side!"

"Let's plunge into 'em heels over head!" said Kenton.

"I don't believe any are now on the west of us," said Charles.

Boone darted a look of admiration at the young man.

"That's the idea!" said he. "They must not kill McGary. Take the Scots with you into the brake and make a circuit beyond the sinkhole. Give the attacking halloo as a signal. We will meet you at the spring."

Words were few and brief, and the order was executed without delay. The enemy retreated up the river, leaving a number of their dead on the ground, and McGary was rescued, but not without the loss of several of his men.

Charles and Kenton followed the foe until they made a stand in the thick woods, when Boone sent them word—himself remaining at the spring, supplying the garrison with water—to desist from the pursuit.

The order was well timed; for the enemy, recovered from the surprise, were preparing to charge in turn. And when the whites were re-entering the garrison the bullets of the Indians were pattering around them.

The exasperated Indians exposed themselves more recklessly than ever, and challenged the white men to come forth again and have a fair fight in an open field. The garrison being outnumbered three to one, of course declined the invitation.

In the course of the day the besiegers were reinforced by several straggling parties; and on each occasion the accession was announced by a particular halloo, well understood by Charles.

"That was the fierce howl of the Senecas," said Charles to Julia, whom he had briefly joined.

"The Senecas!" iterated Julia, in terror. "I hoped they were gone! Their presence here is proof that you or I, or both, have especial reason for painful forebodings."

"I think not," said Charles. No doubt it is the party which captured you, and some of the servile instruments of the vengeful Esther. They fear to appear in her presence without being able to conduct one or both of us as prisoners."

"And what do you suppose would be our fate?" asked Julia.

"If the council of sachems did not interfere it would be a terrible one. The longer Esther hates the more implacable she becomes; and we have thus far thwarted her designs."

"Yes, it is that party; I know it now," said Julia, listening to a familiar sound.

This was the braying of Peter Shaver's ass; and it was followed by the shouts and mirthful laughter of the Indians and British. No chief among them seemed to attract more attention than the renowned Popcorn.

Just then Paddy ran in.

"Och, Misther Charles," said he, with wide-staring eyes, "Misther Boone wants me to go out and help Misther Kenton, who's as crazy as a loon, to catch his horse. It got out of the gate and is playing round the fort, and the bloody savages are watching to kill the first man who lays hands on him."

"If it is Kenton's favourite steed," said Charles, "it must be recovered, or its master will be lost."

"And Misther Boone says I ought to go out and expose me body as a target, because the horse knows me. I shall be careful in forming intimate acquaintance with other paple's horses hereafter! I'll shoot, or I'll dig, but I won't go out horse-hunting wid the blackguard savages!"

When Charles accompanied Paddy to the gate, which was held partly open to admit of ready ingress if Simon should return with his steed, he beheld a spectacle which riveted him to the spot. The horse having become impatient of his confinement, was now making amends by taking sufficient exercise. He ran round playfully, but would not permit Kenton to approach near enough to place his hand on his mane. He reared, kicked up behind, and then rapidly circled round his master.

The Indians, hoping to capture this spirited animal, came from behind the trees and embankments which had sheltered them, and gazed with interest at the scene. They hoped the horse would entice his

master within their reach; and they forbore to fire, fearing, if the horse were killed, Kenton would elude their grasp.

Alternately, when the steed avoided a skilful attempt of his master to seize him, or when Kenton by some manœuvre balked the horse in his purpose of passing him, shouts of applause and laughter came alike from the besieged and besiegers. At last, when all eyes were fixed upon the spectacle, and the deadly strife seemed suspended by mutual consent, they were startled by the renewed braying of Peter's ass, and the next instant that distinguished animal, perhaps recognising the horse as an old acquaintance, rushed forth from the tangled brake, with the frightened Peter on his back. Peter strove in vain to turn him aside, out of the range of the rifles of friend or foe, to which he was equally exposed.

Fearing the loss or desertion of "Popcorn," several of the Indians fired at the ass; but so greatly convulsed were they with laughter that their aim was wide of the mark, and Peter was resistlessly borne along toward the fort. The noble horse pricked forward his ears and stared at the approaching beast. Evidently he did not recognise his old acquaintance, whether from contempt of his meaner nature or because of the change in his aspect—for the Indians had painted the poor creature most fantastically—was not obvious; but, snorting loudly, the noble steed turned and ran toward the gate, followed by Kenton, and both were quickly admitted within the inclosure amid the yells and huzzas of the spectators.

"Don't shoot me! Don't shoot me!" cried Peter, his braying ass still trotting directly toward the gate. "Don't shoot!" he continued, with his arms spread out, and his face turned now toward the fort and now in the direction of the besiegers. "I ain't an Indian! I ain't an Indian!" cried he; "and I guess I'm on your side!"

"Who are you?" demanded the man at the gate, who had never before seen Peter or his ass.

"I'm Peter Shaver! I'm Peter Shaver! Don't shoot! Let me in!"

Boone himself threw open the gate and admitted Peter. And when the jack met his numerous acquaintances, male and female, within the area, he ran about and brayed very rapturously.

There was much joy over the recovery of the long-lost Peter, and he was congratulated upon successfully running the gauntlet of two fires.

"Talking of fires," said Peter, "I reckon I can tell you some news that'll keep you from freezing this winter. The Indians have concluded to burn every mother's son of you! I saw 'em roast a poor fellow the other day! I guess I'll never have a pleasant dream again."

"Every one to his post!" cried Charles. "They are coming from all directions!"

"Reserve your fire!" shouted Boone; "and when they're within twenty paces let each man aim at the one opposite him. After firing, out with your tomahawks and down with your rifles!"

The assailants were divided into four parties, approaching rapidly from the different parts of the compass. They were in number fourfold the strength of the garrison. But there would have been a very material diminution of their force if Boone's directions had been followed.

Unfortunately, Paddy's agitation was so great that his gun went off

a moment too soon. Many others, supposing this a signal, followed his example, but not before the assailants, as was doubtless concerted, had prostrated themselves, and thus escaped the fatal effects of the charge.

"Be jabers, we've kilt ivery blackguard of 'em!" cried Paddy, in exultation. "Be me sowl, I was mistaken!" he added, the next moment, upon seeing them rise again; "they were only stunned."

The few who reserved their fire now selected their victims, and their fatal aim produced an astonishing effect on the savages, who vainly supposed all the rifles were discharged over their prostrate forms.

"We've stopped them! Now, load and fire as fast as you can!" cried Boone, seeing the enemy reeling and hesitating, instead of attempting to surmount the picketing. This order was obeyed with alacrity and complete success on the sides where Boone and Charles and Kenton commanded. But on the other, where Girty led, the assaulting party succeeded in pulling down several of the palisades between the cabins.

They rushed in, tomahawk in hand, and were met by MacSwine and his Scots in the centre of the area. A desperate conflict ensued, amid yells and shouts, the prancing of horses and the braying of the jackass. But the struggle was terminated by the fall of Girty himself, at whose side the Rev. Mr Jones had taken a deliberate aim with his pistol. The Indians and the few British under the renegade's immediate command bore him out, and retreated under cover of the river-bank. Several of the party, however, had been left within the inclosure, and these were immediately tomahawked and scalped.

It was just at this distracting moment, when the battle was won, and the enemy were flying in all directions, that the ears of Charles were assailed by a familiar voice, and, looking in the direction whence it proceeded, he beheld, issuing from the cane on the west of the fort, the form of his forest sister.

She came with arms uplifted, crying, "Kill me! kill me! kill me!"

"Don't fire, for your lives!" shouted Charles, seeing several of the men aiming at the advancing girl.

He threw open the gate and rushed forth to meet her, at the same time speaking in a loud voice, and in the Indian language, to the enemy, beseeching them to spare the sister of of Thayendanegea.

Brown Thrush never lowered her uplifted hands, nor ceased to cry, "Kill me!" until she fell upon the breast of Charles, who, turning, bore her through the gate into the fort, where they were instantly surrounded by eager spectators.

"Oh!" cried Julia, pale and tearful. "see the blood! Who could have done the cruel deed!"

The poor Indian girl was weltering in her gore, inanimate, but with her arms still clasped round the neck of Charles.

"Merciful heaven!" gasped Charles, on beholding the wound in the breast of the poor girl, "who could have done this? Some miscreant has killed her in my arms!"

Every one in the fort denied having perpetrated the act, and as her history was known to most of the garrison, pity and indignation were felt and expressed by all.

"It was one of Queen Esther's instruments! It must have been!" said Charles, weeping over his forest sister.

"Bring her into the cabin," said the Rev. Mr Jones, "and she may recover. She is not dead. I feel her heart beating."

"See! she revives!" said Julia. "Poor sister!" she continued; "I will be her nurse."

Charles followed the preacher with his burden, the arms of the wounded girl still clinging to his neck; and, when gently deposited on a couch, her consciousness returned, and, upon recognising the features of the one she loved, a sweet smile spread over her face.

"My poor sister," said Charles, in broken accents, "why did you expose your tender breast to the aim of the Seneca dogs?"

"The Brown Thrush had sung her last song," said she, in her own musical language, which none but Charles and Mr Jones could fully understand. "She longed to go to the happy land where the bright streams are dancing—where those who love can never be separated—and where the warm sun is never intercepted by clouds. Your wild-wood sister was afraid to take her own life, since the Great Spirit had forbidden it; but she thought he would not be angry if she had another to kill her. I was so unhappy! Oh, my brother, when will you come? And must I travel to the far land alone? How long shall I wait for thee?"

Charles was incapable of utterance, but wept like a child over his dying sister. Mr Jones, perceiving the wound was mortal, and that the poor girl's life was ebbing away, strove to cheer her with such assurances as his mission authorised him to pronounce.

"Do not weep for me!" said she, seeing the tears of Charles and Julia. "We shall meet again where tears cannot come. Then the White Eagle shall love the Brown Thrush as dearly as the Antelope. I am happy now. My sight is growing dim, like the mist of the morning; but thou art near. My sister, give me your warm hand; let me place it on my cold breast. My brother, be happy; but don't forget her who charmed thee in the wild woods with her song. When we meet again in the spirit-land, open your arms as you did to-day, and clasp your sister to your heart. When you did so I was happy, though the wound came at the same moment. I will be more happy there, where no wounds can reach me. Dig a deep grave by the spring, and breathe a prayer over thy faded sister! Farewell!"

Her form sunk back, and her spirit fled to its eternal abode. A profound silence ensued, and every head was bowed in sorrow. The preacher sank upon his knees, and although his lips moved in prayer, no one heard his words but the Invisible Being who alone possessed the ability to grant his requests.

A flag was sent in the next day by Duquesne with a proposition for suspension of hostilities until the dead could be buried; and, as his party had suffered the most severely, and he would derive the greatest benefit from the fulfilment of the terms, the request was granted. But the bearer of the flag was, to the astonishment of the garrison, the famous Simon Girty himself, whom they believed to be dead, and most of them had rejoiced in his supposed destruction. It appeared that a piece of leather in his pocket had saved his life. The ball of the pistol, however, had stunned him and brought him to the ground.

The body of the Indian girl, after being shown to the chiefs of the enemy at their special request, that they might know she had not been

scalped, was inclosed in a bark coffin and deposited in a deep grave under the weeping-willow near the spring, as she had requested.

After lingering a few days in the hope of obtaining horses, but which was blasted by the vigilance of Kenton, the Indians departed for their homes on the Scioto and the Little Miami.

CHAPTER XIII.

SEVERAL weeks after the evacuation of Kentucky by the Indians, Boone, at the head of a party of twenty men, set out for the Licks to make salt,—that indispensable article having become exhausted in the settlements. In this expedition he was accompanied by his brother, and by all the men from the Jenny Jump settlements excepting Charles and Paddy.

During the absence of this detachment the fort was too much weakened to be abandoned by Charles; and his eagerness to return to the Delaware river had to be repressed. And Julia, pleading her promise to her dying father that she would not, during her minority, marry without the consent of her guardian, resisted the importunity of her lover to have their nuptials celebrated in the fort. About this time, during one of the dark nights in winter, when the inmates of the garrison were assembled round the cheerful blaze on the broad hearth of the principal cabin,—the old women spinning flax and the young ones knitting or sewing, listening to narratives of adventures in the wild woods,—Charles was startled by hearing a pebble fall upon the roof and roll to the ground. Used to such signals, he sprang to his feet and was approaching the door, when the gentle hand of Julia arrested him. Pale, and trembling very much, she begged him to desist.

"It is only the hail," said Mrs Calloway, silencing the buzz of her wheel.

"The wind has been howling ever since dark," said Sue, "and it may be the large hail that sometimes falls at the beginning of a storm."

"I don't think any Indians could have passed my father at the Blue Licks," said Mary.

"Not unless they captured him first," said Julia, "which may have been the case!"

"And that's not onlikely," said Paddy, with staring eyes and fallen chin.

"Could you not get into the potato-hole, under the floor, and creep near the door?" asked Mrs Calloway.

"Me?" said Paddy, in astonishment. "And sure I'd be smothered in a minute! I niver could draw me breath!—I mane, I never could see any thing in the dark."

"It is not an Indian," said Mr Jones.

"No," said Charles; "if they had captured Boone and his party they would have gone back to celebrate the event" (which was really the case) "before venturing farther into the country."

"But give me light, Mrs Calloway," said Paddy, "and I don't fear the divil!" and he had made two strides toward the door when another

pebble rattled down from the roof. He paused abruptly. "Och it's only the hail!" said he, and resumed his seat. The next instant, however, hearing some one whistle, he sprang up again, very pale and trembling; but his trepidation was not observed. Both Charles and Julia recognised the signal, and, uttering together a joyous exclamation, the door was thrown open, and the imperturbable Skippie stood in their midst.

The faithful messenger was overwhelmed with hearty greetings, which he bore in silence, but with a proud expression of countenance. He brought, besides the packet of letters, (unsoiled, notwithstanding the inclemency of the season, and the long journey), another accession to Julia's wardrobe. To the profusion of thanks showered upon him he made no reply, and, merely uttering the word ".Virginia," the meaning of which was not comprehended, and pointing to the letters, as if to indicate that they would speak more explicitly, he withdrew to the kitchen, or rather to the cabin where the savoury viands were usually cooked.

Charles's letter was from his father, announcing his continued good health and the determination of France to make common cause with the Colonies. But this resolution had not yet transpired, and was still one of the secrets of the court of Versailles. The aspect of affairs, nevertheless, at that moment, was sufficiently gloomy. Washington, with a mere handful of men, was hard pressed, and retreating before Cornwallis; and a large portion of the people embraced the terms offered in the royal proclamations, returning to their allegiance. The Indians, too, led by Brandt and instigated by Johnston and the Butlers, were desolating the country on the northern frontier. Murphy, Charles's faithful sergeant, did all in his power to maintain the organization of the little band of patriots; but many difficulties were thrown in his way. In short, Charles was advised to return the first opportunity. Such was the purport of the letter he received from his father.

Julia, while reading her epistle from Kate, could not repress her joy upon learning that her old playmate was then residing with the Moravians, in the immediate vicinity of her guardian's house, whither she had flown as to a secure place of refuge during the perils of the invasion of the Western portion of the State, then in possession of the enemy.

"He's well! He's well again!" cried Julia, holding the letter triumphantly aloft.

"He!" said Charles, gravely. "What do you mean?"

"Solo! Kate says:—'When your monster of a friend, from Newfoundland, first beheld me, I could with difficulty elude his rather familiar attempts to place a hand (paw) on each of my shoulders. Tears—whether of joy or grief, how could I tell?"—trickled down, and I could not prevent him from placing his velvet tongue against my hand. How is this, Julia? Has the sagacious animal heard you speak of me, remembered your words, and recognised your friend? Rely upon it, Solo has my love, and will have my watchful care!' There, Mr Eagle! Kate is in love with your rival!"

"Read on! God bless Kate! I shall love her for loving your dog."

"I believe you were once inclined to love her for herself, before she ever saw the dog. But I'll pardon that. Oh! here is something very sad and horrible! Read it for me, Charles."

It was an account of the death of Mrs Caldwell, the wife of the Presbyterian minister. She had been shot by a brutal British soldier, through the window of her chamber when in the act of prayer in the midst of her little children.

This portion of Kate's letter caused a profound sensation, and Mr Jones, no doubt, would have gladly seized the opportunity to "improve the occasion," had his eye not fallen on his own name, in a familiar hand, on one of the letters brought by Skippie. It was from his friend Anthony Wayne, demanding his presence in Jersey, or, as he expressed it, "wherever the enemy may drive us, for we shall never get out of our difficulties without your aid, and I hope the cause is not past praying for."

There was likewise a letter from Mrs Van Wiggens to her absent husband, but none present felt authorised to open it. But Kate, in her diary, mentioned her several times, and said she was succeeding very well with her tavern.

There were also letters from Thomas and Richard Schooley. The former intimated a purpose to have the lands jointly held by himself and Julia's father surveyed and divided, as he had no idea of any portion of his estate being involved in the confiscation. Charles Cameron had been excepted in the recent royal proclamation offering mercy and protection.

Richard announced his intention to seek the hand of Judith Carlisle, the daughter of Abraham, a staunch royalist. And he concluded with a proposition which startled Julia. "Thee must learn," said he, "that this farm, and all the improvements thereon, appeareth upon an accurate survey, and the specifications in the deeds, to fall to thy lot. But, as the expenditures thereon were made by us, we do not doubt that thou wilt deal justly. The royal cause must triumph in the end, and it is greatly feared all thy estates will be forfeited. Now, as I have still a friendly regard for thee, I would gladly provide for thy maintenance. I learn that, with the consent of thy guardian, thou mayest execute a legal conveyance of thy lands; and, indeed, if thy father's Bible, found in one of the boxes, would be taken as evidence, it appeareth by certain writings therein thou art older than we supposed, and of an age to act without the concurrence of thy guardian. Therefore, if thee will name a moderate sum in ready money, as an apparent consideration for the lands, and execute a deed conveying them to me, I will pledge myself, after the bloody storm hath swept past, either to reconvey them to thee, or else to pay thee such additional sum or sums as three honest men may adjudge. And if thee will not agree to do this thee will be a pauper upon the country."

Julia's eyes flashed indignantly. Throwing the letter in the fire, she said, "Henceforth I am a rebel!"

"Amen!" cried Mr Jones. "I'll tell Wayne, and he'll tell Washington! If I'm not mistaken, these Schooleys have more reason to apprehend a loss than yourself. But I must retire. At dawn I shall set out alone for head-quarters. Be not surprised, and do not attempt to interpose any objections. I shall find my way thither in safety." And, indeed, the next morning, having provided himself with ammunition for his pistols, and taking with him a supply of dried buffalo-meat and a canteen of rum, the eccentric preacher set out alone on his journey, never for a

moment doubting his ultimate arrival at the head-quarters of the American army.

As the winter passed away, the joy of the wanderers at the prospect of a speedy return to the Delaware was engloomed by the reception of melancholy tidings. A son of Mr Calloway, about fifteen years of age, who had accompanied his father to the Licks, came in one day, pale, haggard, and half famished. He told his sister, who wept upon his neck, that their father and the entire party at the Licks had been surrounded and captured by an army of more than a hundred warriors. They had, however, pledged themselves to Boone that the lives of the prisoners should be spared, and that they should not be subjected to the humiliations and pains of the gauntlet.

The Indians, instead of assaulting the forts, which might have been carried when weakened by the loss of their best men, hurried away as usual to celebrate their success. And it may be here remarked that the stipulations agreed to by them were faithfully fulfilled.

The capture of the men at the Licks occurred late in January, and February had been appointed by Charles as the time of setting out. It was now feared some delay would ensue, as he could not in honour abandon the post assigned him when the opinion prevailed that the Indians would return after depositing their prisoners in a place of security; and the distribution of the emigrants recently arrived among some half dozen forts might not suffice for their defence if a single man were subtracted.

This apprehension was removed, however, by the unexpected arrival of another body of emigrants. It appeared that the glowing accounts of the salubrity of the climate and the fertility of the soil, which had reached the East, had stimulated the people of whole neighbourhoods to emigrate; and every man brought a gun with him.

His design being thus facilitated, and having the repeated assurances of Julia that she would be able to perform the journey, (for she had learned many lessons in woodcraft during her sojourn in the wilderness,) Charles made preparations for an immediate departure. Their horses were selected and caparisoned. Buffalo-robes for their warmth and shelter were provided. Food was packed, and every needful arrangement for their comfort and safety completed. Then, taking leave of their Western friends, with many regrets for the loss of the comrades left behind them, Charles, Julia, Skippie, and Paddy commenced the long and weary journey eastward.

The incidents of minor interest during the journey eastward, the scenery in the mountains, which were still covered with snow, the hunting adventures of Paddy, and the hearty though rude entertainment afforded by the few scattering cabins on the way, I cannot dwell upon in this place. Events of greater magnitude must occupy the remaining pages of my narrative.

Once more Julia and Charles and Paddy were in the ancient village of Burlington. And at that time it seemed to have greater pretensions to rivalry in the race of cities than at the present day. The idea that it would surpass Philadelphia in population had not, perhaps, been entirely relinquished; but the hope has faded since.

Julia, as soon as she was landed from the schooner at the foot of Main Street, proceeded without delay, followed by Paddy in the capacity of

footman, to the residence of her guardian, which she supposed would still be found remaining in the occupancy of the old housekeeper. To her surprise, if not satisfaction, the first person she met, when passing the threshold, was Thomas Schooley himself.

"Why, Julia," exclaimed he, "do I behold thee again?"

"Plase yer honour," said Paddy, "I'll swear to her idintity, as they made me do wanst before the corner, when Mary McShane made way wid herself."

"Swear not at all, Patrick," said Thomas.

"Not I, sir; but, plase yer honour, you have confi-sed to me, and called me be me own name."

"And am I so much changed, Thomas?" asked Julia, smiling. She had procured new apparel in Philadelphia, and there was no perceptible alteration in her appearance since their separation.

"No—Julia—no! Thee does not seem to have changed in aspect or inclination to follow the fashions in the style and colour of thy outward adornments. But I did not expect to meet thee here. Sit thee at the fire, and a breakfast shall be prepared for thee. How didst thou come, and from whence?"

"We have just landed from the schooner we embarked in at Washington. But, before leaving the fort in the western wilderness, Skippie had delivered thy letters."

"The letters!" said Thomas, with unwonted energy. "Hast thou preserved them?"

"No, Thomas," said the girl, with an angry look. "I consigned both thine and Richard's letters——"

"To whom? Speak, Julia!" he said, hurriedly and in uncontrollable agitation.

"To the flames," she continued.

"Flames! I thank thee!" he added, breathing freely. "But it was not respectful; yet we will say nothing more about it."

"But we *must* have more to say in regard to those letters," said Julia. "Why didst thou write me in that manner? And why wert thou so greatly excited just now, Thomas?"

"Thee shall know all, Julia; only be patient. The times are perilous, and the world is ever changing. The offer was made by Richard in good faith. But since then George Washington has performed miracles. He has surprised and beaten the King's forces in several places, and recovered the greater portion of this Colony. But the next change will be in favour of the royal cause, and we who are opposed to strife will have rest and peace."

Julia listened attentively, without interrupting her circumspect guardian; and, when he had finished discussing the affairs of the Colony, she hastened to inform herself in relation to matters in the Jenny Jump settlement; but affairs there had experienced no material alteration since her last advices from Kate. She was gratified, however, to be informed that her guardian was only on a brief visit in Burlington, and having despatched his business, would return immediately.

Charles and Skippie sat in the bar-room of the principal hotel at the junction of Main and Broad Streets. During the last year the establishment had experienced several changes of proprietors. The last landlord, whom we shall designate by the name of John Brown, to

avoid identification, was familiarly known by the cognomen of *Mr All-right*, John being peculiarly adapted to all parties and exigencies. Mr Allright John Brown was a bustling, portly, talkative, accommodating host.

When Charles and Skippie entered the bar-room a party of Tories had just been drinking at the bar, and as they withdrew from the house they paused at the corner and cast curious glances back at the strangers.

"Don't notice 'em!" said the host. "They are idle characters," he added, in a low tone, "who do nothing but drink and pry into matters which don't concern them. I wonder they didn't question you as to which side you are on."

"And, pray, to which side do they belong?" asked Charles.

"Oh, they are for the King," said the host.

"And I am for the Congress!" said Charles.

"I thought so!" exclaimed Brown, smiling, and enthusiastically shaking the hand of his young guest. "*I* am all right," said he, with a significant wink. "But, my young friend, be cautious how you express yourself before strangers. One-half of 'em are rank Tories, and they swear every rebel here shall swing on Gallows Hill. By walking out into the middle of the street you can see the hill, and the scaffolding erected last Christmas eve. But that night Washington crossed the Delaware and played the d—l with their calculations. Walk into the next room. I smell the ham and eggs. And take my advice and hold your tongue when curious ears are about."

Charles and Skippie passed through the door to which the landlord pointed, and sat down to the savoury repast. While they were appeasing their appetites the door communicating with the bar-room being left ajar, they heard the following conversation between the host and a new visitor:—

"Thee must still see after my house, John," said the visitor, "and supply the servant with food."

"Certainly, friend Thomas," said the host; "you may depend on me. You have become my surety for the payment of the rent. As I was saying last night, when General Cadwallader arrived and interrupted us, the 'Sons of Liberty' were once going to tear down your mansion, but I prevented it by saying you were as good a Whig as old Flint-face himself."

"Thee should not have said that, John. We are not permitted to lie. If they had torn down my house there would have been a reimbursement out of the forfeiture of their own estates."

"But suppose the rebellion should never be put down, friend Thomas; what then?"

"No matter; I tell thee I would not lie to save my house."

"I know thee wouldn't, friend Thomas; and thee didn't. Your conscience had nothing to do with it; I lied for you. *I* don't mind it."

"Thee must not do such things, John! I tell thee it will not answer. If thee don't mind lying, how am I to judge when thou speakest the truth? Thee says thy business is profitable. How am I to know it? Thee declares I run no risk in being thy surety for the rent; perhaps I shall have it to pay for thee! Besides," continued he, willing to change

the subject, "I hear that thee professed great attachment to those officers of the rebel army who put up with thee when passing."

"Ha! ha! ha! Of course I did! Would you not have me be agreeable to my guests? And you'll hear the same thing of Lord Cornwallis and General Howe, when they come. *I'm* all right! You needn't fear."

Just as he uttered these words, Charles, who had finished eating, returned to the bar-room.

"Hem! I—just step into *that* room!" said the host to his young guest, pointing to another door. "There is a good hickory fire in it. Step in!"

"I have seen Julia," said Mr Schooley, advancing and offering his hand, which Charles did not refuse, "and learned thou hadst returned. Thee looks well; and I am glad to see thee dressed after the habit of civilized men, albeit I do not approve the colour and fashion of thy garments."

"Hem! That's strange!" said Brown, aside. "Glad, and don't approve! And they know each other. I'm thinking friend Thomas knows more about lying than he pretends to."

"My garments suit myself," said Charles, "as thine do thee, friend. I do not object to thine."

"We will not quarrel about our clothes," said Mr Schooley, smiling faintly. "I am a man of peace, as I would have all men to be; and I learn it is thy intention to return to the upper settlement. I am glad of it. I do not think thee will permit thy sergeant to annoy us any more by exacting money from Richard."

"Murphy must collect the fines prescribed by law," said Charles.

"Law! Well, thee may live to know what law is! But no more. We must not quarrel. To-morrow we will journey together. Farewell, till we meet again." Thomas withdrew, and hastened to collect the interest on various sums loaned to the thirty members of the Quaker society, composing a large proportion of the population of Burlington.

"Gad!" exclaimed Brown, approaching Charles, "you know him? I'm all right! Schooley's an old rascal,—a rank Tory! And he's going to cheat one of the prettiest girls in America out of her fortun'. He's as rich as Crashes now, but he wants more. It's a pity some handsome young fellow like yourself don't marry the poor girl, and save her fortun'. They say he had her taken off by the Indians, but they wouldn't kill her."

"That was a lie," said Charles. "I know her, and I know the tale is without foundation."

"I'm glad to hear it. There are always a great many lies in circulation. I hate a liar as I do a Tory. I'm all right! And I'm glad friend Schooley isn't so bad as represented. But he's as rich as Crashes, and you know such men always have enemies."

"Of course they do," said Charles. "But can you tell me what has become of Governor Franklin?"

"The governor? Certainly! He's in New York. The British exchanged a general for him. He's at the bottom, or rather at the head, of all the Tories in Jersey. He knows who's who in these times, and he knows *I'm* all right! Sometimes he is at Staten Island, and sometimes at Amboy; and they do whisper he has even been here, in dis-

guise," continued Brown, in a low voice, knowing that Franklin was, at that moment, in his house!

"Who occupies his mansion on the bank?"

"None but one of the old women of the family. The celebrated doctor sent the woman up to see after his furniture and books, and the people haven't disturbed the place at all, on the doctor's account. But it's haunted!"

"Haunted?"

"Bless you, yes! I thought everybody knew that. Why, the old sycamore, belonging to the witches, is just before the door. They dance and sing and knock every night. It is said they have bought young Ben Shephard from his father."

"And do the people believe such things?"

"Of course! And it's a good thing for the property."

"I suppose they are afraid to enter the mansion?"

"They are, by gum!"

"Friend Charles," said Thomas Schooley, re-entering, his countenance betraying a mental struggle, "I have returned to have a sober talk with thee. Come into the next room. Now, my friend," resumed he, when they were seated in the snug chamber, since converted into a parlour, "why should we not explain ourselves and have a clear understanding of each other's purposes?"

"I do not know by what authority you demand——"

"Tut! Pr'ythee, Charles, listen patiently to me. It may be well for thee and for us both. An accommodation may be effected, a compromise——"

"No, sir! I love Julia, and you are her guardian. You can withhold your consent to our nuptials until she arrives at a certain age, which if the old Bible is to be believed——"

"Thee has seen Richard's letter. Well, the figures are uncertain. Whether the date is 1755, or 1758, it would be hard to decide."

"No matter. I have no right to investigate the subject. You can withhold your sanction, and we can wait, till your authority ceases. That is all. I will not compromise my own or Julia's character by any sort of agreement or bargain——"

"Thee misunderstands me, and will not listen. Will thee answer one thing?"

"I don't know."

"I will ask the question, and thee can answer or not as thee pleases. Dost thou intend to wed my ward clandestinely, or openly against my wishes?"

"I will answer that, because it is not impertinent You are her legal guardian——"

"I am glad thee acknowledges so much."

"And I am her ardent adorer."

"Thee speaks as if she were a divinity!"

"No matter. You do not comprehend such things. I intend, friend Thomas, to see Dr Odell, and if he will marry us—Julia consenting—we will return man and wife to the Jenny Jump."

"Indeed! It is boldly spoken!"

"Yes, and——"

"Thee is disposed to swear. I will leave thee."

"It is an inclination I will repress;—a habit in civilized society, and particularly among the loyalists. I did not contract it among the Indians. They never swear. But, Thomas, I am quite sure—at least very fearful—that Julia will not comply with my request without your concurrence."

"I thank thee for thy frankness. Adieu till we meet again at——"

"But, Thomas, why be in such haste? A word from thee will be sufficient to remove the obstacle, and then Julia will consent. I have been candid."

"Thee has, and I will be so too. Thee shall not wed my ward with my consent!"

"Very well! I shall not beg you to relent, nor attempt to entrap you into a compliance. But you may rely upon it that Julia will never marry your industrious son. So, if it be your expectation to obtain her fortune in that way, you will be disappointed."

"Thee may have learned, since our letters to our ward seem to have been subjected to thy perusal—albeit she said they were burned——"

"She said truly. She threw them contemptuously, as they deserved, into the fire."

"I am glad of the action, and care nothing for the contempt. Thee has no doubt heard of the purpose of Richard to mary Judith Carlisle. Thee has not heard of the misunderstanding since then—but no matter! Charles, thee thinks me a worshipper of mammon, an idolater of gold, without honour or religion. Thee does not know me. Fortune is desirable, and it is not sinful to seek it honestly. It is not wrong to marry a wife with riches. But I have a duty to perform. I made my friend, Julia's father, a pledge which I must fulfil. Her fortune shall not be imperilled while she continues under my control. That is the promise I made. If I were to consent to her marriage with thee, everything would be lost when order is restored and the king's authority re-established."

"Oh, yes!—when the devil reigns, justice and virtue—but no matter! It will be seen who are losers. You think the advices by the secret messengers from New York are cheering. So be it. I have advices too. Let the game be played. I win if you lose."

"Thee talks like a gamester. Farewell!" And Thomas withdrew.

Charles strolled out into the street, and, passing the Friends' burial-ground, where so many had been laid without monument or inscription, approached the Episcopal church, (St Mary's.)

The door was partly open, and he thought he heard the last notes of sacred music dying on the air. He paused and looked in. The Rev. Dr Odell stood before the altar, with cup and plate before him, while about a dozen females knelt around the chancel. On that unusual day, and at that singular hour, he was administering the sacrament to a small remnant of his flock. There was not a man among them. We trust the same disparity of sex may not exist in heaven!

Charles, yielding to the solemn impulse of the moment, strode forward and knelt among them. He, too, although so long a wanderer, belonged to the same flock. Tears were on the cheeks of the pious minister, and several of the women were sobbing.

When they arose, the eyes of Charles and Julia met. They had been

kneeling together; and when the rest withdrew, the lovers were beckoned aside by the priest.

"My dear children," said he, when they were seated, "God has conducted you to St Mary's holy shrine on the day of separation."

"Separation!" said both Charles and Julia.

"Separation; and perhaps a final one," said the minister. "The earthly shepherd is driven away from his flock; but the heavenly Shepherd remains. Be of comfort. The spirits of the pious dead who lie around us are at peace. We must join them in time. They will inscribe our names on the marble over our dust, and we too, will have our rest. It matters not where they may place us, or who chisels the monumental marble, or what inscription there may be upon it, so our names are written in the Book of Life. The faithful will meet again in heaven. Farewell, my dear children! I must go!"

"Go! Whither?"

"Whithersoever they may drive me. I must practise what I have preached. We are commanded to render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's:—to honour the king and obey his statutes. And for doing this my enemies have decreed that I must leave the Colonies. I will not attempt to pronounce judgment in this unhappy controversy. Neither will I violate my own conscience or shrink from my duty. It is the last time I shall see the faithful remnant of my flock. Hence my tears. Farewell!"

"Doctor," said Charles, "Julia and myself are affianced lovers. Will you not unite us in lawful wedlock before you go?"

Julia's veil dropped down over her blushing face; but she trembled and withdrew her hand, which Charles had seized.

"It may not be, my son," said the minister. "I know all. Julia has told me all, and obtained my advice, which is disinterested. I could not sanction a violation of her solemn pledge to her father, nor could I approve of her linking her earthly destiny with one who might bring sorrow upon her gentle spirit. I know you will be incapable of inflicting pain upon the beloved of thy heart. Others would inflict it. When, as it is not improbable, like other mistaken enthusiasts, you shall be brought to the block for rebellion against the king——"

"Doctor!" exclaimed Julia, "it is not rebellion! it is revolution! And I am as stanch a patriot as Charles. Were I a man, I would rush into the battle-field and fight for liberty!"

"Poor thing!" said the doctor. "Well, my dear children, you must excuse me. I cannot and will not violate my sense of duty——"

"Forgive me, sir!" said Julia, quickly; "I do not desire you to perform the ceremony which Charles is so anxious to have consummated. But I do not condemn his patriotism, and I do not fear the cause he espouses will entail ruin on him. I will abide by my promise to my dying parent——"

"God bless you both!" ejaculated the minister, holding a hand of each. "Farewell! Postpone the solemnization of your nuptials until this hurly-burly be done. If God so wills it, the Colonies may be free—if separation be freedom; and if not—but time will prove all things, and you are both young enough to wait for the end. Adieu! And may heaven's choicest blessings be showered upon you!"

After lingering a few moments, Charles and Julia withdrew, and, as

they strolled together toward the mansion of Thomas Schooley, they were met by that gentleman himself, very pale and anxious.

"I hope thee will tell me truly and without delay," said he.

"Tell thee what?" demanded Charles.

"Whether John hath spoken truly."

"What John? There are many of them."

"John Brown, the hotel-keeper. He says you have been married at the church."

"Friend Thomas," said Charles, "you know John has acquired the accomplishment of lying. And I am very sure you will be happy to learn he has been lying to thee this time."

"That may be very witty; but thou hast to learn that principles are immutable things. I shall be glad to learn that thee has not been wedded, and regret that John lied about it."

"I am justly rebuked, Thomas, and ask thy pardon," said Charles.

"Thee has it. But thee has been to church?"

"Yes, sir. Dr Odell believes, as you do, that we are rebels———"

"I know that."

"No doubt; but unlike yourself, he intends to leave us."

"He leaves no estate behind."

"His treasure is above. He has been administering the Holy communion to a remnant of his flock, who have taken a final leave of him at the altar."

"Mummery! Theatrical pageantry!" said Thomas.

"Mr Schooley," said Charles, "if you discard the Holy Scriptures, your religion is that of the heathen; but if you be a Christian, how can you deride the commands of the Saviour?"

"Rebuked in turn!" said Julia, as she sprang into the hall of her guardian's house, which they had just reached.

"Charles," said Thomas, as the young man paused, and was about to return to his hotel, "if thee will come and sup with us, I will explain the principles of our religion."

"I will call during the evening," said Charles, "and listen to thee, provided, if we should be converted thou wilt sanction our———"

"Pooh! nonsense!" said Thomas, entering the hall and closing th door behind him.

CHAPTER XIV.

Leaving to the imagination of the reader the meeting of Kate and Julia and Solo—of Charles with his father, and Paddy with everybody—and the effect the narration of their adventures had upon the minds of the neighbours,—it will be necessary, without delay, to proceed to scenes of a different nature, and to use the utmost privilege of condensation to confine them within the limits prescribed.

One day, when Julia and Kate and Charles were sitting under the broad boughs of the old council-tree, in the quiet little valley where the lovers' vows had been exchanged the preceding year, they were startled by the sudden barking of Solo, who had been panting at their feet. But, upon observing the faithful sentinel wag his tail, they were satis-

fied no enemy lurked in the vicinity; and, a moment after, they beheld Calvin, the young Delaware chief slowly and gloomily approaching. His form was wasted, and his eyes deep and sunken in his head.

"My brother!" said Charles, stepping forth and tendering his hand to the young man.

"You do not come as an enemy, I am sure," said Kate, "or else the faithful Solo would have resisted your approach."

"No," said the Delaware; "the Wilted Grass lies on the silent grave. It is no longer among the dewy buds. The spring and summer of its existence have passed away. The blossoms have fallen, and the sweetest flower of the forest hath faded! It can never again lift up its head. Speak to one another, laugh, and be happy. As for me, regard me as one perished from the earth!"

"No!" said Julia, "you must learn to forget the woes of the past, be strong of heart and cheerful of spirit. "You will meet in heaven," said Julia.

"Ay—and I would go thither without delay."

"We must submit without complaining to the will of God," said Charles. "But tell me, Calvin, is it true the Mohawks believe that I or one of my party winged the fatal messenger?"

"The Senecas say so, and Queen Esther asserts it. The Oneidas alone deny it. Gentle Moonlight is a raving maniac, ever calling upon you to save the Thrush from the arrows of Queen Esther!"

"I feared so!" said Charles, sadly. "But the Senecas, who perpetrated the deed, and their demoniac queen, who demanded the sacrifice, shall pay the penalty! Will you not go with me and my company into Tryon county?"

"No, I am going home to die."

"But the rest?—can you tell me what has become of my faithful Scots and Van Wiggens and Peter Shaver?"

"There!" said Calvin, pointing in the direction of the Delaware River. And, to the great joy of Charles, Wilted Grass informed him that the whole party had escaped from the Indian villages, with some twenty Oneidas, and were then approaching the settlement. He had left them in the morning at the river, and parted with them merely to announce their coming.

And, having performed his mission, the stricken youth rose up and vanished in the forest. He did not pause when they besought him to remain, nor answered a word to their entreaties.

The girls and Charles hastened away to announce the tidings. The news was received with stoical indifference at the house of Mr Schooley, where Kate was now sojourning with Julia. Richard was the overseer, and neither Van Wiggens nor Peter Shaver ever managed the farm to better purpose than he.

But the tidings of the return of Hugh MacSwine and his little band of Caledonians afforded very great satisfaction to the "Gentle Lochiel," the recluse father of Charles.

In the afternoon the news of the approach of the returning prisoners, accompanied by twenty Oneida Indians, having spread for miles round, the inhabitants of the entire neighbourhood assembled in front of Mrs Van Wiggens's tavern, now a famous stopping-place, to witness their arrival.

But the general joy was cut short by the arrival of runners from New York and Pennsylvania, with the information that the Butlers and Brandt, led by St Ledger, were approaching from Canada, and, if the forts on the frontier were not quickly manned and bravely defended, the whole region between the Susquehanna and the Delaware, and on both sides of those rivers, would be overrun and ravaged by the Indians and Tories.

No time was to be lost. And Charles with a considerable party of volunteers determined to set off at once to meet them.

We must now pass over many historical events in which some of our characters were conspicuous actors, but which are not embraced within the limited scope of this narrative. The fall of Herkimer, the timidity of Woolsey, the venial tardiness of Van Rensselaer, and the alternate successes and disasters in the North, the reader must be already sufficiently familiar with. Charles Cameron, Hugh MacSwine, and Tim Murphy, performed their duty in all the conflicts in which they were engaged with the enemy in fort or field, and received the commendations of their superior officers. Nevertheless, the tide of invasion was not driven back, and during the absence of the Jersey volunteers from the counties of Hunterdon, Warren, and Sussex, Bonnel Moody, with his band of robber Tories, committed many depredations on the unresisting inhabitants, consisting mostly of old men, women, and children.

The young ladies continued for some time to enjoy an exemption from molestation at Thomas Schooley's house. Nevertheless, the repose of Mr Schooley's household was doomed to a sad interruption. The Indians, if they did not make night-assaults, prowled about in the day, killing their enemies and destroying such property as they could not bear away. The Tories, desirous of escaping detection when the next turn of Fortune's wheel might dim the lustre of the cause they espoused, contrived to keep out of view as much as possible. But their depredations and cruelties after sunset were awful.

Skippie, who saw everything if he spoke nothing, had been well advised of the approaching tempest, and gave his chief early information of Moody's contemplated attack. And Mr Cameron had invited Julia and Kate to take shelter within his strong walls, until the company of patriots, commanded by his son, whose absence had been protracted, should return to the neighbourhood. The girls, under injunctions of secrecy, had been previously admitted within the hidden chambers; and therefore, when the summons came, accompanied by the intelligence that the Indians (a detachment that passed the forts and descended the rivers) had murdered Colonel Allen in his bed, and a whole family by the name of Wells, even tomahawking and scalping the infant children, they obeyed with alacrity.

The girls had not been gone more than a few hours, before a party of Indians burst in upon the Quaker's family, and after killing and scalping old Rose and another negro woman, were about to treat Mrs Schooley in the same manner, when they were scared from their purpose by the sudden and involuntary descent of Paddy from a loft in which he had hid himself. The Indians, supposing a large party of the enemy were concealed in the loft, and believing Thomas had led them into an ambuscade, ran out; and Paddy's voice sufficed for the tongues of a dozen men. Seeing them run, he called on an incredible number of

saints to save him; and they, believing they were the names of persons really existing, and then present with rifles in their hands, fled away and sought shelter in the woods.

The Indians, however, did not lose much time. Recovering from their panic, they started upon the trail of the girls without delay.

Meanwhile, Julia and her friend, under the convoy of Richard Schooley, lost no time in reaching Tower Rock—the name bestowed on the abode of the aged exile.

Richard, declining the invitation to tarry, bade the girls, and particularly Julia, a doleful farewell. And Kate, when she extended her hand in parting, archly imitated the desponding gestures of the sighing lover. Richard departed bewildered and bewitched; for the girls when mischievously inclined, certainly do possess the power of enchanting inexperienced swains.

Thus enraptured, he paused in the densest part of the forest before a large beech-tree, on the rind of which he distinguished something among the many marks that resembled a J. Supposing it might be the initial of his lady-love, he stepped forward and kissed it. It had been meant, however, for a horseshoe, to indicate that some one, probably an Indian, had gone in a certain direction on horseback. And feeling, for the first time in his life, quite poetical, he drew forth his knife and carved some verses on the tree.

After finishing the inscription, and when turning mournfully away, he was confronted by the leader of the Senecas.

"How do?" said the Indian, advancing, and laying his hand on the shoulder of the astonished youth.

"Thee knows my father—" began Richard.

"No. Don't know him! What's that?" he demanded, pointing at the inscription. It was a famous writing or picture tree, which had been used by the savages for many generations. They could interpret the marks made by themselves, but those cut by Richard were wholly unintelligible.

"Thee cannot understand it," said Richard.

"Read—say!" continued the Indian.

Richard obeyed.

"Julia! Antelope!" said the Indian. "He love!" Then, uttering something aloud in his own language, the rest of the savages rose up from the tangled bushes, or emerged from behind the trees, and came forward laughing heartily at the interpretation of the inscription given by their leader.

"Thee knows my secret now," said Richard; "and thee will not take her away again."

"Antelope must go! Queen Esther calls her.'

"I tell thee no. She shall not go."

"She nice squaw. Make me wife."

"Thee a wife!" said the indignant Richard. "If thee harms her, or takes her away again, Sir William Howe shall be informed of it, and he will have thee scourged."

The Indian sneered at the threat; still, he could not forget that Sir William was the king's great general. But he was far away, and dead men could tell no tales. And yet he felt some hesitation in putting to death those who professed loyalty to the King, and moreover the pro-

verbially peaceful Quakers. Nevertheless, as he paused in doubt, his anxiety to procure scalps—for which the Indians received a certain price from the British—almost induced him to sink his tomahawk into the unoffending head of his sighing captive. But, recollecting the enterprise was to be mainly under the direction of Bonnel Moody, who, with his band of Tories, had appointed the beech-tree as the place of meeting, he reluctantly desisted. Richard's hands were bound behind him, and he had no assurance of escaping death at the stake.

A rustling was heard in the vicinity, and soon after voices were distinguished. The Indians concealed themselves, commanding Richard to be silent.

The stragglers were Mr and Mrs Schooley, who, under the leadership of Paddy, had lost their way.

The Seneca chief, rising as they approached, advanced toward them, followed by the rest, who surrounded the weary fugitives. They made no resistance.

The chief uttered some commands to his followers, when Mr and Mrs Schooley, and the quaking Paddy, were all seized and bound.

Thomas having brought a large sum of money with him in the hope of gaining a place of safety, the Indians were soon in a warm dispute over it; and the contention rose to such a pitch that knives were unsheathed, tomahawks brandished, and no doubt the disputants would have proceeded to blows, had not Moody and his band of Tories arrived upon the ground to prevent the catastrophe.

The Tories being more numerous than the Indians, and the latter having been directed by Queen Esther to obey the commands of the royalist, Moody cut short the disputation by seizing the money himself, promising, however, to make an equitable division at his cave; and then cutting the cords that bound the captives, "These are your friends," he said, winking to the Indian chief, who had only executed the Tory-robber's orders. We will conduct them back to their home, and dine with them, as a token of penitence for the mistake."

"If thee would convince us of that," said Thomas, "thee had better give me the money."

"That is filthy lucre, Thomas, and its restitution might cause a quarrel, and perhaps bloodshed, among the King's friends. Come on; you are now free, and the Indians will do you no further injury unless you insist too much on having back the gold."

"And, be the powers," said Paddy, afraid of the Indians, "I am included in the same party! I'm one of 'em, Misther Mody, and I'm thruly glad we have fallen into the hands of sich a liberal and ginerous gintleman; and I'd be extramely oblaged if ye'd let me go and wait upon the young ladies, who are wishing for me at the Tower Rock."

"Tower Rock! Yes, you shall go there with us, Paddy. We will visit them to-night. They will know your voice, and perhaps you can aid us in getting possession of the old refugee. You shall share the reward, and have a portion of his treasure. I suppose, Paddy, since you are one of Mr Schooley's family, we can rely upon your loyalty. If you are a Whig, say so, and we'll have your scalp on the same string with the negro woman's, and save the hind-quarter of a pig at dinner."

"Say so? And would you have me to tell a lie, Misther Mody? I was born under the reign of King George, of glorious mimory! Misther

Mody, if iver I live to get back to ould Ireland, the king shall hear from Paddy's lips what a thrue and valuable subjict he had in the wild wuds of Jenny Jump Mountain! You are fit to be a gineral, Misther Mody, and his Majesty couldn't do a better dade than to make ye a knight, and bestow on ye a noble ancestry. Try me, Misther Mody, and saa if Paddy don't drive the old gray rat into yer hands. And as for the reward, Paddy has not the maneness of soul to desire a pinny of it! No, Misther Mody, it shall be yer own." And, as he cast up his eyes to impress Moody with an idea of his sincerity, he beheld Skippie in the tree over his head, winking and making mouths at him.

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN the girls entered the hut, the aged exile cordially greeted them and having the dark barrier removed in readiness for their ingress, they passed at once into the rock-bound chambers of the cliff.

The chief sought to interest them by showing his treasures and relics, and thus for several hours they had been entertained, when they were interrupted by the creaking of the massy door communicating with the hut. It was Skippie, who had come to inform his chief of the arrival of several of the clansmen from the mountain (being all that remained), and who, in accordance with the chief's directions, were then concealed among the brambles on the summit of the cliff, armed only with bows and arrows and spears, being too weak in number to make any open resistance to the assaults of Moody's party. He likewise informed his chief of the scene he had witnessed under the tree.

Skippie was commanded to admit Paddy when he arrived, and afterward to go in quest of Charles.

When the moon had dipped beneath the western horizon, and the silent scene was wrapped in the solemn gloom of darkness, the approach of Moody and his gang was announced by the loud and shrill whistle of Skippie, who lay concealed on the margin of the stream that meandered by the base of the precipitous cliff. As he anticipated, the signal was heard by the hostile party, which immediately halted.

"They have been informed of our approach," said Moody. "That is their signal. I have heard it before, and every time we were foiled. It must not be so now. Go, Paddy, deliver this paper to the old man, and bring me his reply to the summons. And beware that you do not deceive us! Remember! if you neglect your duty, or fail to return within ten minutes, we will commence the assault, and you will be burnt at the stake!"

Paddy started forward desperately, making a great noise in the bushes. "Don't shoot!" cried he. "I'm Paddy, the Irishman, and not an inemy. Waah!" he screamed, as he was seized by the lurking Skippie.

"Silence!" said Skippie, pulling him toward the hut.

"Ye may well say that, afther ye have taken me breath!" said Paddy.

"Whisper!" said Skippie.

"I can't. But I kin run!" and he sprang forward with such activity

that he was soon sheltered within the hut, where he was surprised to find no one to whom his message could be delivered.

"Where's tho owld man?" he asked. "If he's gone, I shall be kilt and roasted alive!"

"Go in there!" said Skippie, as he pushed the door back with the iron bar.

The chamber Paddy was ushered into was illuminated by a small lamp. He stood in the centre and gazed round in utter astonishment. The aged exile and the girls were silently observing him, themselves unseen.

"Wa-ah! Oh-oh!" cried he, starting back, as he perceived Julia and Kate emerging from the dark passage. "And is it yer blissed selves the devil's got? And ye're smiling, too! Or is it faries me eyes behowld? Och, and wuddn't ye be kind enough, gintle spirits, to tell me whether Paddy's raally slaping or waking?"

"Your eyes are open, Paddy," said Kate, "but still you may be dreaming."

"That's yer voice, I know. And so Paddy's alive, and not roasting at the stake? And this is the rale house of owld Misther Cameron! It's a palace for a king! And there's his honour himself. Och, and I'll deliver me message onyhow!"

And he did so. The aged exile read the note and listened to Paddy without stirring a muscle.

"Go," said he, "into the balcony, facing the stream, where our foes are awaiting my answer, and say, with your loudest voice, that the usurper's enemy, whom they seek, will hold no converse with them, and defies them."

"And it must be thrue that we are safe, or sure you wuddn't bid me say sich a thing? The saints be thanked! And Paddy's the boy that'll answer 'em. Plase now, swate darlints, show me the way to that same balcony, and go wid me, or I might stumble and fall through."

It is a solid floor, Paddy," said Julia, smiling.

"And it's yerself who considers us safe in the house?"

"Quite safe, Paddy; even if they were to discover the entrance from the hut, one man with a brace of pistols could defend the passage."

"Good! Paddy's a fraa man agin! and as lively as an aal. Now, plase, lade me to the balcony, and jist listen at the brave missage I'll spake till 'em!"

Julia and Kate led Paddy by a sort of masked balcony ingeniously carved in the rock, where there had been a fissure, overgrown with ivy and small cedars.

"Now, Misther Mody, where are ye?" he cried, in a loud voice.

"Here! What does he say, Paddy?" responded Moody.

"He ses he won't disgrace himself by howlding any conversation wid sich a set of blackguards as ye are."

"If that's his answer, Paddy, you may come back," said Moody.

"Many thanks to you, Mr Mody; but I'm comfortable here, taking care o' the ladies, and I sha'n't lave 'em as long as they nade a protictor."

"That's very kind in you, Paddy," said Kate. "But, bless me, they're firing at us!"

This was true. More than a score of guns were discharged at the

hut and the cliff; and Paddy, ducking his head at the flash of another volley, rejoined the party in the large apartment, where the aged exile sat in undisturbed composure.

"Oh, they are burning the house!" cried Kate, hearing the roaring of flames and the yells of the assailants.

The aged recluse, awakened from his reverie, turned his calm countenance toward the young ladies, and besought them not to be alarmed.

"You can now comprehend," said he, smiling, "why the exile did not build a better house in the valley. It was quite good enough to burn, and it was foreseen that such would be its fate."

"There!" cried Julia; "one of the Indians has been killed by somebody. I heard the death-halloo!"

"Probably a shaft from one of my brave Scots posted overhead. They cannot bear to see my poor house, worthless as it is, destroyed by my enemies."

"Mercy on us!" cried Kate, "and what is that?"

"Another familiar sound!" said Julia. "It is the awful signal of blood!"

"It seems to me like the braying of an ass," said the old man.

"And yer ears don't desave you," said Paddy. "Wan of Quane Anther's guards, who follers us from wan end of creation to anither, rides on a jackass that brays like the devil ivery time he smells blood. I hope the blackguard the Scots have kilt is that same murthering Seneca wolf."

"And can they not mount to the summit of the cliff and slay the poor Scots?" asked Kate.

"They might gain the summit," said Mr Cameron, "but it would then be deserted. My men have holes, like foxes, to hide in."

"Be my faith!" cried Paddy, "but they'll find 'em. The Indians know how to hunt the foxes. They'll mount up to the top of the house and come down on us. Thirty to one! And it was Paddy who forgot there was any top to the Tower Rock!"

"Your alarm is needless," said the old man. "It is a solid rock. Long before they can cut through my roof, nearly two hundred feet in depth, my son will be here."

"Thrue, yer honour," said Paddy, reassured. "And I'm sure I trust the walls are strong enough to support such a roof as that."

Another fatal shaft from the summit was announced by the furious yells and maledictions of the besiegers, and it was succeeded by a general discharge of their pieces at the precipitous face of the rock. The altitude from which Paddy had spoken to Moody betrayed the locality of the besieged, and the mystery of the means of escape from the smouldering tenement was in part explained. It was announced by Moody to his followers that the refugee had retired into a cave whose entrance had hitherto escaped discovery; but he doubted not they would soon find it, when the rich treasure, so often dwelt upon in his speeches, and which had excited the cupidity of his company, would be divided among them.

Fortunately the mass of glowing embers deposited by the consumed hut prevented an immediate approach to the only place of ingress. Nor was it likely that the besiegers would suspect an orifice had been cut in the solid base of the cliff. They would rather look for an exca-

vation under the hut, supposing the diminutive habitation had been erected over the mouth of the cave. And, impelled by this idea, the greater portion of the Tories and Indians were soon engaged in removing the smouldering rubbish from the earth, but still failed to perceive the entrance at the fire-place. The rest were dispersed in various directions, seeking the foe who winged the fatal shafts.

Another terrific yell announced some new event. Kate and Julia clung tremblingly to the aged chief, while Paddy turned pale and glanced toward the darkest recesses of the room.

"Fear not, my children," said Lochiel; "there is no danger. There is but one avenue of approach, and that a child might successfully defend. There are caves also entering into these chambers, which I have recently opened. But they are dark, and seemingly interminable. I have explored them, and do not think they lead to the surface anywhere."

"I saw the dark howls," said Paddy. "And we can hide in 'em if they find us here."

"We must defend the passage," said the exile, "if they discover the door. Listen! I understand it now. Some one has discovered whence the shafts of my faithful Scots are launched. Hark! They are rushing up the valley to attain the summit. But my eagles will have flown when they reach their eyrie. There are innumerable crags, moss-covered fissures, brambles and cedars; and my trusty clansmen are familiar with the hiding-places. Be not alarmed, dear lasses; the old chief will answer for your safety. Go to your couch and rest in peace."

Julia and Kate, yielding to the desire of the aged chief, retired for the night. The old man, left alone, with profound indifference to the machinations of his foes, opened the volume before him, and dwelt in rapture on the pages of the poet.

Paddy was also soon asleep on a bed of rushes in a corner near the aperture of one of the recently opened passages in the rock, into which it was his determination to plunge if they should be surprised before morning.

Without, a solitary Indian stood by the crystal stream near the base of the cliff. He peered through the darkness at the place whence Paddy's voice had proceeded, in height some twenty feet, and through entangled bush and creeper, distinguished the rays of the lamp within as they shot feebly upward in empty space. Lochiel was too thoughtful to permit them to reach rock or tree, so as to betray his locality; but the Indian had perceived them in the atmosphere. He stood with folded arms, gazing with direful intent. Near him, on the margin of the water and opposite the cliff, was a tall hickory-sapling. The dusky son of the forest, when he removed his eyes from the leafy aperture in the cliff, gazed stedfastly at the young tree. After measuring its height as well as possible in the obscurity, he divested himself of his rattling beads, wampum, and silver plates, and placed them beside his gun on the ground. A strong buffalo thong, taken from his leathern pouch, was wrapped loosely round his neck. He then climbed the tree as a sailor would a mast. There were no branches near the ground, and his ascent was unimpeded until he reached a height equal to that of the aperture in the cliff.

After pausing a few moments and gazing fixedly at the dimly-illumi-

nated fissure, during which neither sound nor motion could be distinguished within, he proceeded upward, even when the stem of the sapling was no greater in diameter than his arm, and swayed to and fro with his weight. Keeping his back on the side next the cliff, he continued to ascend, until, arching over the running stream, the topmost bough of the tree rested against the face of the cliff. The Indian made it fast to a point of rock which projected over the vine-masked balcony, and then, softly detaching himself, obtained a lodgment in the rift where Paddy had been standing. Perfectly motionless, he listened for many moments; but neither sound of voice nor motion of feet being detected, he entered the chamber.

Guided by the light of the lamp, he approached the table where the white-haired exile still lingered over the entrancing pages of the poet. He gazed cautiously round, and, perceiving no one else in the apartment, glided noiselessly towards the table, his glittering tomahawk brandished in his hand. The old man, unconscious of his approach, was smiling sweetly. This the savage perceived, and paused. Why should he smile? Was it an ambuscade he had plunged into? Certainly not; for the Kacha Manito and not man had made the hickory-tree. But might not the exile be a magician or great prophet? Again he paused. No! If so, why seek security within the rock?

Raising his tomahawk once more, the Indian stepped forward and aimed the fatal blow; but his arm was arrested midway by the teeth of Solo, who had been lying in the dark shadow of the protector of his mistress. The weapon fell clanging upon the stone floor. Releasing the arm, and twice barking sharply, the faithful dog grappled the throat of the Indian and bore him to the earth. The girls, awakened by the sound, sprang up, screaming hysterically, for they believed the place to be in possession of the enemy. But, seeing no one near, they ran toward the lamp, still flickering on the table in the adjoining apartment. There they beheld the aged exile rising slowly from his great chair, with a finger on the page, that the place might not be lost. At his feet stood Solo over the prostrate Indian, who breathed with difficulty under the pressure of the faithful animal's jaws.

"What is it? who is it?" exclaimed Julia.

"Bless my life!" said the old man, "it is an Indian! How did he find access?"

"It is indeed!" said Julia, thrusting away the tomahawk with her foot, and ordering Solo to relax his hold. "It is one of the terrible Queen Esther's guards—one of my captors—and the chief who wounded Solo! It is a just retribution."

"The noble animal has saved my life, lassie," said the old man, reluctantly withdrawing his finger from the page. "It was not so much revenge for the injury he had sustained, as the generous impulse to rescue me from death. Noble dog! Cherish him, Julia, my bonnie daughter!"

"Oh, I shall certainly do so!" said Julia, bending over the Indian, whose breathing became easier under the relaxed pressure. "See how bloody!" she continued. "I would not have him die. He might recover. He is a Mingo or Minisink chief."

"Do you surrender?" asked the aged chief. The Indian, still speechless, nevertheless comprehended the meaning of his words, and lifted up his hands beseechingly.

"Where's the Irishman?" asked the old man. "Let him bind his hands."

"Paddy! Where are you, Paddy?" cried Julia and Kate, but no Paddy answered. They sought his couch, and found his bed of rushes, but Paddy himself had vanished; and so they returned to the old man and his captive, the latter being narrowly watched by Solo.

"Stand up," said Mr Cameron, placing his foot against the savage, "and tell me how you got into my house."

The Indian was soon sufficiently recovered to give the information demanded. He could speak enough English to make himself imperfectly understood, and his gestures did the rest. The tree was remembered. but no one had ever thought it could be made the means of gaining access to the apartments; and the old man smiled at the ingenuity of the savage, and felt satisfied that his little fortress was well enough guarded at all other points, and was not likely to have many assailants from the quarter whence the Indian had found an entrance.

"Pronounce his doom, my bonnie lasses," said the aged chief, drawing forth a pistol from beneath his chair.

"Oh, do not kill him!" exclaimed the girls. "He may become a friend, if his life be spared."

"He has penetrated my secret. His eyes are even now glancing at my little wealth scattered about the room——"

"Still, it will be out of their power to reach us. They will retire to their own country, and you will not be molested again!" said Julia. pleading for the life of the captive.

'I have no pleasure in slaying my foes, my dear children," said the old man, replacing the pistol. "Lead him to the balcony, and tell him he is free."

The savage understood him, and offered his hand in token of gratitude. It was not refused by the exile, who, a moment after, resumed his seat, and was once more bending over the volume.

Julia motioned the savage to retire toward the balcony, while Kate and herself, preceded by Solo, followed his steps. The enfranchised Indian, by his looks and gestures, expressed to the young ladies the thanks his tongue could not utter. And when he reached the aperture, through which the early gleams of day were now struggling, he extended his hand to each of them, and bade them a grateful adieu. The next moment he had vanished, having descended the tree without detaching its top from the rock.

The rising of the sun was the signal for the renewal of the fierce shouts of the implacable enemy, and Paddy, wandering to the balcony, peeped out from behind the ivy-vines and cedar bushes.

A single glance sufficed to appal him. A dozen Tories and Indians were grouped around the slender sapling, the topmost bow of which still remained attached to the point of jutting rock, bound by the strong cord of buffalo-hide.

They stood in silent wonder or whispered consultation.

"Some one of their friends got in during the night," said Moody. "And if a white man can enter why can't an Indian?"

This was succeeded by "ughs!" of approbation, and several of the Senecas volunteered to make the attempt. At that moment the Indian who had climbed the tree joined them; and, as he was a famous adven-

turer, and one of the bravest men of the party, Moody was surprised to see him sit down and muse in silence.

"Will you not go first?" he asked.

"No! Me no go!" was the abrupt response. And Moody turned away, and bestowed his praises on the intrepid chief already ascending.

"Misther Cameron! Misther Cameron!" cried Paddy, rushing into the presence of the old man. "They're climbing in at the winder! We'll be murthered!"

"Don't be alarmed, my children," said the old man, rising. "The thong must be cut, and then they will desist."

"Let Paddy do it," said Julia. "Do not go yourself, sir!"

"Plase yer honour," said Paddy, quickly, "me knife's too dull!"

"Take my dirk," said Mr Cameron, offering the polished blade.

"And plase let me have the loan of yer pisthol, for fear wan of 'em may be in."

"And Solo shall accompany you," said Julia.

Paddy returned cautiously and reluctantly to the balcony, accompanied by the girls, and followed by Solo. The Indian had not reached the face of the cliff, but was within a few feet of it, and making rapid progress in the perilous ascent. By a spasmodic effort, Paddy, after giving the pistol to Julia, succeeded in severing the cord. The elastic sapling sprang back to its original position, and hurled the adventurous climber some fifty feet into the brushwood, through which he plunged with great force, crashing among the boughs, and finally fell to the earth, amid the shouts and laughter of the spectators.

Moody now attempted to reach the fissure from above, and a great cable, composed of hempen strings, hair and hides, was tied to a rock on the apex of the cliff, and within a few feet of the precipice.

The first Indian that ventured over the precipice was furiously assailed by an enormous eagle. Descending again like a bolt from a thundercloud, the eagle ripped open with his beak and talons the skin on the shaven crown of the invader of his domestic precincts. A cry of pain startled the spectators, and the next moment the suspended savage relaxed his grasp and fell headlong into the shallow stream beneath, upon whose bed of rocks his body was crushed like the flattened ball of a rifle against a flint-stone! The friends of the unlucky Indian rushed forward and dragged his mangled corpse from the water. A broken shaft of an arrow floating down the current attracted no attention, or was supposed to have belonged to the unfortunate adventurer.

A second Indian descended the cable, and,—although untouched by the eagle, which, however, did not cease to dart at his head, in defiance of the shots fired at him,—like the first, and precisely at the same place uttered the death-shriek, and fell upon the same rock at the bottom of the shallow stream. This time the shaft remained in the body, and a yell of rage succeeded the discovery. A general search for the hidden foe ensued. Like trained bloodhounds, the Indians sought and found the trail. Shouts of demoniac joy announced the discovery. Two or three of the boldest Indians precipitately followed it, leaping over rifts and holding by the tenacious cedars, when their progress was suddenly arrested by the ferocious growl of a panther, whose head protruded from a small cave in the rock beside the path, and but a few paces before them!"

"Ugh! ugh!" each of the Indians uttered in turn, on beholding the glaring eyes of the beast. The growl had likewise been heard by those below, watching the progress of the young warriors. And when they beheld the head of the animal thrust from the rock, they fired and wounded him. He sprang forward with a cry of rage, and, seizing the foremost of the Indians in the narrow path, they fell together on the rocks beneath, both mangled and dead.

At this juncture a warwhoop was heard in a westerly direction. Moody and the Senecas listened with suspended breath for its repetition; but it was not repeated. Moody and his men immediately posted themselves in the passes of the intersecting valleys to defend the approaches to the cliff.

This was hardly accomplished, when the aged chieftain, hastily closing the book from which he had been reading announced the approach of Charles.

"Listen!" said the old man, leading the way to the balcony. "That is the *Oolah* of the Senecas! They are already flying before my victorious Charlie!"

It was true; but they were retreating toward the cliff, resolved to prevent any communication with it by a desperate stand at the stream that swept round its base. With their backs toward the besieged, and sheltered in front by the embankment of the stream, the bushes and trees, Moody and his party awaited the approach of the rescuers.

Soon the close proximity of the rescuers was announced by a simultaneous discharge of rifles, both from the embankment and from the trees and bushes on the level space beyond, and the fire once begun, was continued without intermission, accompanied by shouts and yells, and the death-shrieks of the fallen.

"Now let us surprise them!" said the old man, who had charged several pistols with powder, and given them to his guests. "There are four of us, and if we fire in quick succession they will suppose there are eight guns in their rear. Besides, I see my faithful men on the cliff are plying their arrows."

He was obeyed, and the demonstration was crowned with complete success. Moody, appalled, was the first to give way, and his Tories followed him. The Indians could not maintain the conflict alone, and soon fled after them. Crossing the shallow stream, and passing over the ruins of the burnt hut, they sought shelter in the ravine at the head of the range of cliffs. Here they made another stand, their rifles still partially commanding the position they had relinquished, but not including within their range the ground occupied by Charles.

Charles, convinced that his parent and Julia must be looking down from the aperture, with the location of which he was familiar, advanced into an open space, and waving his hat, was joyfully recognised by those whose prayers were unceasingly uttered for his preservation.

He was joined soon after by Murphy, Van Wiggens, and Peter Shaver, the latter leading the ass, which he had met with in the woods, and which it seemed was destined to be ever crossing his path.

"Where's Hugh?" asked the old chief, from the rift in the rock.

"Fallen!" was the sad response.

The old man, pale and sorrowful, bowed his head upon his breast.

"Tam dem!" cried Van Wiggens, as a fresh volley was fired by the

Indians, the only effect of which was a slight wound in the ear of Watch, who uttered a sharp cry and shook off the blood.

"Hide yourself, my son!" cried the old man, "or come hither immediately; else they will slay you before my eyes. It is my little treasure and your life they seek!"

"I cannot abandon my brave men, father," said Charles. "And the battle is not over yet. We have been followed by Brandt and a few of his bravest warriors, urged by the bloodthirsty Esther! She murdered my men who became their prisoners with her own wrinkled hands! And Brandt, whom I loved and called my brother, seeks to slay me, believing I killed his sister. Twice have I spared his life, hoping to make him hear my denial, but I was disappointed. When he listens to me, and believes me, as he must, he will retire. I hear him now! That is his terrible warwhoop! Spare him, my brave men! Spare him, for my sake, and for the sake of his poor murdered sister. Let me speak with him, and we shall be reconciled."

When he ceased speaking, the junction of Brandt with Moody and his Senecas was announced by the most deafening yells.

The battle was renewed. The enemy poured down the narrow ravine into the broader valley, led by Brandt, who called aloud upon White Eagle to come forward and decide the contest by single combat.

And when the Senecas, Mohawks, and Tories returned to the cliff in such overwhelming numbers that Charles was forced to retire across the stream under cover of the intertwining thicket, the old hag, Queen Esther, stood upon the desolate apex of the knoll at the summit, waving to and fro a staff she termed her sceptre, and mumbling one of her incantations which had great influence over the superstitious minds of the savages. She had a book, in which were kept the names of her victims. The number was then two hundred and ninety-eight, and she declared the White Eagle and his father would make an even three hundred.

Brandt led the way over the stream, being some twenty paces in advance of his party; and, although several of them fell, victims of the deadly aim of the concealed remnant of patriots, the great chief himself sustained no injury. And Charles, though exposed more than any of his party, likewise remained untouched. Brandt had ordered his men to spare him, not that his life might be saved, but that he might be reserved for his own hand.

And soon they met face to face in a small opening in the forest. Brandt was pursuing his intended victim, who, perceiving it, had purposely separated himself from his party.

"Three times have I spared my brother's life," said Charles, lowering his rifle, and stepping boldly out from behind a holly-tree.

"And you did so, because you had already shed enough of the blood of Thayendanegea!" was Brandt's reply, as he paused abruptly, frowning fiercely, his tomahawk brandished in his right hand.

"No, my brother, it was not so. It was because I desired to convince you that never a drop of my poor sister's blood was shed by me."

"And can you do so? Does the White Eagle say he did not shed the blood of the Brown Thrush?"

"Listen, Thayendanegea. We were boys together. We bathed in the same streams by sunlight and by moonlight, or when naught but the feeble rays of the distant stars twinkled upon us through the broad

leaves of the sycamore. Then we clung to each other in confidence, and the Kacha Manito smiled upon our affection. I have not changed."

"Not changed! We bathed in the limpid Wyalusing, beside the wigwam of my people. The smoke of the council-fire ascended the blue sky. The tassels of the corn bent under the weight of the bees, whose hum filled all the air with music. All was peace and happiness. Not changed! Who has made the home of my people so desolate? The corn is trodden under foot, the wigwam is in ashes, and the Wyalusing encrimsoned with blood! And who wrought this destruction? Why, the army of Sullivan, sent thither by the great village-burner, Washington, whom you serve! Not changed!"

"My brother cannot have forgotten who were the first aggressors. But I speak not of war. I say my heart has not changed!"

"But you have not said you did not slay my sister—she who loved you, and sang by your couch when you slept."

"I do say it."

"White Eagle once was incapable of lying. If he had not changed, I could not avoid believing him. But the white man has the ingenuity to prove the guilty innocent, and the innocent guilty—to make solemn oaths to dire falsehoods, the word meaning one thing, the act another. False! false! Not changed!"

"No; not changed. I make no solemn oath. I merely tell thee that I am innocent of thy sister's blood. If I lie, strike me dead, and send me with the falsehood on my tongue before the Great Spirit who judges all things. Strike! There is my rifle on the ground. Thy brother will make no resistance, nor shrink from the blow!"

"Oh, my brother!" exclaimed Thayendanegea, dashing his tomahawk to the earth, "I see the truth in thy tears. Let us clasp hands. Though separated, we shall be brothers still. They made me believe thee guilty. And who lied to me? Esther! she, more cruel than the Senecas, and a pale-face! Oh, my brother, she hath written thy name in her roll of victims! I may not save you. But this hand shall be guiltless of my brother's blood, and I will do all in my power to shield you."

"And, Thayendanegea," said Charles, "I here declare if I survive, my voice shall be heard in behalf of my forest brothers and sisters. Go back to your people, my brother—to the nations which acknowledge you as their king,—and tell them they have been deceived. America will be free. To Washington they must look for protection. The British armies will be beaten, and who then will be their friends?"

"Friends? And who are the friends of the Indians?—those who pay them for the scalps of the enemy, or those who take the land which the Great Spirit bestowed upon them?"

"You will be paid for the land."

"Paid? And when we must sell our inheritance against our will, who is it that shall name the price? Alas! it must be so. I see it. The Indian is doomed. But, in the land of spirits, in the great hunting-grounds beyond the grave, he will be at peace. Farewell, my brother. I will return to the last abiding-place of the deer and the wolf."

"Hark! what sound was that?" exclaimed Charles, turning his face toward the cliff, whose summit alone he could see from his position, and where he beheld the frantic gesticulations of the old fury—who likewise heard the sound—summoning the Senecas around her.

"It is the drum and fife of the white man," said Brandt. "They are coming to drive back the poor Indian from the last of his beautiful valleys. They will hurl us hence as the storm-wind rolls the foaming surf on the burning sands; but they cannot restore the dead to life. And it was necessary to appease the Malcha Manito by offering a certain number of victims. But enough has been done. I see a white flag approaching, and I will assemble my followers around me."

He then uttered the rallying-hallo, and commanded a cessation of hostilities; and, that his brother might not be mistaken for a doomed prisoner, he laid his arm on his shoulder, and they advanced together to the sparkling stream, where friend and foe were soon mingling in conscious security, and Charles was hailed with joy by the inmates of the excavated rock.

A company of Wayne's men had arrived from the glorious field of Monmouth. The British had retired beaten from the bloody plains of New Jersey, and detachments were sent from the American army to repel the aggression of the Tories and Indians on the borders.

The first one recognised by Charles was the Rev. David Jones, at whose solicitation the company from Wayne's brigade had been marched in that direction. He was welcomed likewise, by Julia, whose voice he heard and knew, although he could scarcely see her through the clustering foliage; and the aged exile would not permit the girls to join their friends below until the last of his treacherous foes led by Moody should depart.

"What have you to propose?" demanded Brandt, still encircling the neck of Charles with his arm, as if he feared the doomed victim of Esther might fall in his presence. "What do you demand of us?" he continued, addressing the captain of the company of Continentals. "I am Brandt, of whom you may have heard much, and probably much that is untrue. But he is your enemy. Yet he did not come hither to wage war, but to slay the supposed murderer of his sister. He was innocent. He is still my brother. For the last time my arm is round the neck of my brother, and we shall soon part to meet no more. I will return to that remnant of the broad country which was once all our own. Shall I go in peace, or must I fight my way thither?"

"Go in peace. We shall not be the first to break it," said the officer.

Brandt then spoke in a loud voice to Esther and Moody, who were on the summit of the cliff, surrounded by their followers. He told them that his brother was innocent of his sister's blood, and that the one who injured him would be the foe of Thayendanegea. And he said he had agreed to a suspension of hostilities on the eastern side of the Delaware. Then, by the authority vested in him as Grand Sachem of the Six Nations, he commanded the Indians to return to the Delaware.

"And now, my brother," said he, embracing Charles, "we are reconciled, but we part. Farewell!"

And then, averting his face, Brandt stole away toward the dense forest. But he had only proceeded a few steps when the report of a rifle rang in his ear. His first glance was toward the crest of the cliff, where the small cloud of smoke still lingered. His next was at Charles, who staggered forward, and would have fallen, if the great chief had not caught him in his arms.

A prolonged, thrilling shriek was heard at the cliff. Then the heavy

door was swung back upon the blackened fireplace of the consumed hut, and Julia sprang forward and glided frantically toward her beloved. Neither rocks nor streams nor armed men impeded her course. Her white robe streaming in the air, her hair hanging down dishevolled, she rushed forward and threw her arms around her wounded lover's neck. Brandt relinquished his burden, and, hastily uttering a few words to the astounded officer, leaped across the stream like an enraged tiger after his prey. Before a gun was raised by the astonished soldiers, the great chief was seen again upon the dizzy height, with his hand grasping the throat of the murderer.

"He confesses the deed!" cried Brandt. "And he it was who killed my sister. Behold the vengeance of Thayendanegea!"

He plunged his knife into the breast of the guilty savage, who sank down at his feet without a struggle. And before the eyes of the spectators could be turned again in the direction of the fallen youth, the gigantic chief drew the murderer forward and hurled him over the precipice!

"Cold! cold!" said Julia, sitting on the ground, with the head of the speechless and dying Charles resting against her bosom.

Pale and tearless, the poor maiden was led away. The body was soon after borne along the same path, and the next day it was placed under the willow. But Julia never wept. She only chanted the incoherent ballad which her disordered mind seemed to be ever composing.

Lochiel, bowed with grief and weight of years, departed soon after in one of the French ships, and died in Paris.

Julia remained at her farm, probably unconscious of the lapse of time, for many weary years, a lonely dweller among successive generations; and, finally, when she had attained her eightieth year, departed without a groan or a disease, and joined her friends in heaven.

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THE INSURGENT CHIEF.

CHAPTER I.

PERHAPS nowhere in the British Islands will the admirer of the grand and sublime, in the works of nature, find more gratification than along the northern shores of the county of Antrim. The Giant's Causeway, which forms a part of this wonderful coast, has long been an object of astonishment, both to the philosopher and the peasant. It is annually visited by travellers from all countries where science excites curiosity, and the wonders of nature inspire admiration.

Edward Barrymore was in his twenty-second year, and had just finished his education at Trinity College, when he resolved to visit this interesting coast. It was in the afternoon of a very fine day, in the month of May, 1797, when he arrived at the promontory of Ballygally. He alighted and sent forward his servant with the horses to the next town, which was about three miles distant, intending, after he had explored the cliffs, to follow along the beach on foot.

He descended the crags and got to the beach, when, turning round a huge rock, he perceived an elderly gentleman, with a young lady, advancing along a sandy portion of the shore towards him. Not wishing to be seen, and, at the same time, struck with the appearance of the lady, he concealed himself in such a manner that he had a fair view of them, without being himself noticed. They advanced slowly until they came to the bottom of the rock where he was stationed, when all at once they disappeared; but not until they were so near that he heard the lady utter the following exclamation—"Oh, father, what miseries are in store for thousands!" and immediately he was startled with a sound, as if part of the cliff on which he reclined had broken off. Full of astonishment, he got down to the bottom of the rock, but could perceive no traces of the persons who had just the moment before excited so much of his attention. Their sudden disappearance was to him quite unaccountable, unless he should suppose, that they had found admission into some cavity within the rock. He viewed it at every accessible point, and minutely examined every fracture and crevice, in the hope of discovering some concealed entrance, but in vain. He imagined, however, that he heard as from a distance, the sounds of footsteps and voices; but they soon died away, and left nothing audible but the screaming of the seafowl and the dashing of the waves upon the shore.

Edward, however, determined to remain near the spot until night, in hopes that something might take place that would lead to an explana-

tion of the mystery. For this purpose, he chose a recess on a level with the beach, under an over-arching ledge of the precipice, by which he conceived the fair vision and her companion, if they were really mortal, must return, as he knew that there was no passing by the way he came, unless by clambering up the rocks, a task which would be almost impracticable for the lady.

Having a small volume of Virgil in his pocket, the time unheedingly stole away, until the shades of twilight aroused him from his situation. The tide, which had been advancing all the time, now rolled at his feet, and rendered it impossible for him to retreat from his recess without the greatest danger. He was a good swimmer, but the shore was unknown to him, so that he could not tell how far he might be from any spot, where it would be possible to land. To stay where he was, was evident destruction. The tide encroached rapidly upon him, and he had no alternative but to encounter the waves. He, accordingly, plunged in, and endeavoured to gain the mysterious rock, for the purpose of escaping by the way he came. A current of water, however, that issued, now that the tide was so far advanced, between that and another rock farther out in the sea, rendered his efforts unavailing, and becoming exhausted, he expected nothing but immediate dissolution. In this situation, he heard a scream, and immediately a loud voice, calling, "Swim a little more to the right, and out to sea—I shall help you!" He obeyed, and got out of the influence of the current that had baffled him, but was on the point of sinking with fatigue, when a powerful arm seized him, and dragged him to the shore in a state of insensibility.

When Edward recovered, he found himself in bed, in a small apartment belonging to a respectable farm house. The mysterious gentleman was employed rubbing his breast with warm spirits, while his fair companion sprinkled hartshorn drops over his brows and temples, and occasionally applied them to his nostrils. An elderly peasant woman was also busy rubbing his feet and legs with warm flannels.

"Oh, father! thank Heaven! he breathes," were the first sounds heard by Edward, on his recovery. "God be praised! then all is well," was the reply. He lifted up his head to look at his preservers, and to thank them, but his voice faltered, and he could only press the hand of the young lady, in token of gratitude. A lovely blush suffused her countenance, but she spoke not; while her father exhorted Edward to remain silent, as perhaps exertion, in his present exhausted state, might be attended with bad consequences. Edward obeyed, for his mind was so distracted with the hurry and variety of his reflections, and the strangeness and intensity of his emotions, that he knew not what remarks to make, or if he knew them, he could not find suitable expressions to convey them. He was glad, therefore, to conceal his confusion in silence.

He was not long in this confused state of agitation, approaching almost to delirium, until a doctor, for whom the old gentleman had sent, immediately on getting him ashore, arrived from Larne, the adjoining town. After administering a composing draught, giving a few necessary directions, and assuring the bystanders that all danger was over, he took his leave, promising to return the next morning. The old gentleman and his daughter then wished Edward a good night, and retired.

Left to himself, he gave a range to his imagination, on the strange

occurrences of the day. His exhaustion, however, and the influence of the medicine he had taken, soon interfered with these waking dreams, and he fell into a refreshing sleep, which continued till midnight. When he awoke, he found that he had been attended by two decent-looking, elderly people, a man and woman, who appeared to have been reading a newspaper. Not perceiving when he awoke, they continued the conversation which had been excited by the newspaper.

"An' they are raising a subscription for the benefit of Orr's family, an' I this day put my name down for half a guinea; for you know, my dear, that what is gi'en to the persecuted, in a guid cause, is never lost; besides, I would not let it be said, that William Caldwell refused to help a man who was suffering for his country."

"Ah, my dear, you did well to gie the money, but I wish these things may come to a good end. I'm feared the poor United Irishmen will never do ony guid; and though I love Mr O'Halloran, I wish he could not have persuaded you to join the United Irishmen, for I fear this work will bring trouble on us all."

Here, Edward, not wishing longer to act the mean character of a listener, made a noise, as if he had just awoke from sleep. The woman having inquired how he felt, requested permission to bring him some wine and toast, which she said the doctor had allowed him to take as soon as he wished for refreshment. "The wine," she remarked, "must be very good, for it was sent from the castle by Mr O'Halloran, God bless him, just of the kind he keeps for his own use. Oh, sir! how fortunate it was that he and Miss Ellen were at the Point, otherwise you would have been drowned altogether, for he jumped into the sea, and saved you, just when you were sinking the third and last time. And then, Miss Ellen, how she attended to you till you recovered! God bless her every day she rises, for she is as good as an angel, and as beautiful too."

Edward begged to know whether Mr O'Halloran lived far off, and whether he might not have an opportunity of thanking him for the important service he had rendered him.

"Oh, that you will," she replied, "for he lives only about a mile off, and I'm sure he will be here in the mornin', for he will not be easy till he sees himsel' that you are gaun to live an' be weel."

"And the young lady," said Edward, "does she live with him? Is she his daughter."

"She is his granddaughter, but he still calls her his own child, for since that jewel o' a woman, her mother, died, she is now all that he has."

"Janet!" cried the husband, "you disturb the gentleman owre much wi' your cracks. You had better let him sleep. Come awa', we'll send Peggy to tend him."

"Ay, ay," said the wife, "Peggy is a tidy lass, an' winna' mak' sic a clatter as I hae done. Guid nicht! or, rather, guid mornin', sir; sleep sound, an' whatever you want just ask it frae Peggy, an' you'll get it at yince."

They both left the room, and Edward had just begun a train of reflections on the strange incidents of the preceding day, when the door gently opened, and a pretty, modest-looking peasant girl, apparently about seventeen years of age, entered the apartment without noise. As Edward lay quiet, she slowly, treading on tiptoe, approached the bed in

order to ascertain if he was asleep. Presuming that he was, for he purposely feigned to be so, she was about to retire in the same slow and noiseless manner, when wishing to detain her, that he might get some more information concerning O'Halloran and his lovely granddaughter, he asked in a tone as if he had just awoke, if any one was there?

"Yes, sir," was the reply, "my mother sent me to see if you wanted any thing."

"My pretty girl, I want nothing but to inquire in whose house I am, and by what strange accident I have been brought here."

"The house is my father's, William Caldwell's, and you were brought here, carried by Mr O'Halloran, our landlord at the castle, quite dead, for he found you drowning in the sea, at the Point Rock."

"And are you acquainted, Miss Caldwell, with the young lady, his granddaughter?"

"With Miss Ellen? Yes, I am, sir, right well, for she has no pride at all. She sends for me often to walk with her from one house to another, when she visits the poor sick people of the neighbourhood, and carries things for their use; and we often go together to the top of the hill, when it is a clear day, where we can see Scotland, and the ships passing back and forwards."

"And, my dear girl, does she ever speak of her parents? Do you know anything of them?"

"I remember her mother. She died about seven or eight years ago, when I was a very little girl. Her father, it is said, fled the country for fear of being punished for killing some lieutenant in the army, in a duel, when she was but an infant."

"Have they never heard of him since?"

"Not that we poor country folks know of."

"Did you ever hear his name?"

"Yes; his name was Hamilton, and she should be called Miss Hamilton, but her grandfather will let her be called nothing but Miss O'Halloran."

"Has she any brothers or sisters?"

"No; her father and mother did not live long together. They never had any children but herself. But, sir, the doctor told us not to fatigue you by talking to you too much. If you want anything, tell me, for I ought not to stay longer with you, unless to attend you."

Edward bade her good-bye, thanked her for the information given him, and the attention she had manifested to his comforts.

The various agitations of his mind, together with the still fatigued state of his body, soon again found relief in sleep, from which he did not awake until the arrival of the doctor, accompanied by O'Halloran and his granddaughter. The doctor found him rather exhausted, with a slight degree of fever, readily enough accounted for by the preceding day's accident. O'Halloran was desirous that he should be conveyed to the castle until his recovery, which was at last effected. The doctor then, having given some directions for his management, took his leave, carrying a letter to Tom Mullins, Edward's servant, whom it was expected he should find at the Antrim Arms, in the town of Larne. In this letter he informed Tom of the accident he had met with, and instructed him to continue at the inn until further orders, without communicating to any one his master's real name or quality, as he had

important reasons for wishing to remain unknown in this part of the country for some time.

Edward Barrymore was of a very conspicuous family, distinguished alike for its rank, wealth, and devoted attachment to those political principles which had set the family of Brunswick upon the British throne. With respect to England, their politics were exactly those professed and acted upon by the whigs of the country. Hence they were in favour of extending every kind of indulgence to the dissenters, and had opposed the American war, and Lord North's administration. In Ireland, however, where their principal property and influence lay, they supported every high-handed measure of the government, and were rigid sticklers for the Protestant ascendancy.

At the period at which our history commences, Edward's paternal uncle, the Earl of Barrymore, was a member of the Irish Privy Council; and his father, who was a member of the House of Commons, had distinguished himself by his strenuous opposition to some measures, which had recently been introduced into parliament for the relief of the Catholics.

In consequence of these circumstances, Edward supposed that if he made himself known, he should be no welcome guest in the house of O'Halloran, whose political principles, he had reason to believe, were in direct opposition to those of his family, and, as he could not venture to incur the dislike of the lovely Ellen, or her venerable grandfather, who had saved his life, he determined on concealment.

CHAPTER II.

On the fourth evening after his arrival at O'Halloran Castle, Edward Barrymore being considerably recovered, took a walk, in company with his host and Ellen, along the beach, in order once more to view the spot that had likely to have been so fatal to him. Returning homewards, they took a path along the edge of a rivulet, that led to a small glen, not more than the fourth part of a mile from the Castle.

Struck with the beauty and romance of the scene, Edward paused. "This, indeed, Mr O'Halloran," exclaimed he, "is a delightful place."

"Yes, Mr Middleton, (which was the name Edward had assumed) our country is indeed a pleasant one. Her soil is fertile, her sons are brave, her daughters fair, but she is an oppressed country. Thousands of her sons have sold themselves to strangers, whose delight is to rule her, not with a sceptre of justice, but with a rod of cruelty."

"My friend," replied Edward, "I cannot altogether differ with you in those sentiments, for I believe that the authorities of the country have not done as much as they could to promote its prosperity."

Edward had scarcely finished this remark, when the attention of the party was drawn to a man of peculiar appearance, who advanced slowly towards them. On coming forward, he took off a gray cap, made of rabbits' skins, which had covered a head the hair of which was as white as snow, and making a respectful bow, asked God to bless them, and was passing on, when Edward, who wished to avoid renewing the political conversation, and whose curiosity was really excited by the appear-

ance of the stranger, thanked him for his civility, adding, "My good sir, perhaps you are like myself, a stranger in this part of the country, and, not having the good fortune to meet such friends as I have met with, may require some assistance from those who may be willing to afford it." So saying, he held out a handful of silver to the stranger, which, to his astonishment, he refused, but without any air of offended pride.

"Although I am a forsaken old man," said he, "I cannot take your money. In this glen it would do me no good. Mr O'Halloran and my other neighbours supply me with food, I get water from that brook, and very little more clothing than I have on me will be sufficient to cover my carcass until the grave covers it.

Edward was in the act of putting up his money, when a coarse, unhesitating voice called out briskly, "Giff auld Saunders dinna tak' yere money, my bonny young gentleman, ye needna' be at the pains to pit it up! Peg Dornan winna refuse't."

Edward turned round, and beheld a stout, weather-beaten woman, in the habit of a beggar, apparently between forty and fifty years of age. She made a low, unceremonious courtesy, and held out her hand for the money. Edward hesitated; but amused with her manner, he handed her the money, enjoining her not to make a bad use of it. She made another courtsey, and told him she would buy herself a new bonnet, and wear it on Sundays, for his sake, though he might never see her again. "But gin ye shouldna'," she continued, "bonnie Ellen will, an' surely that will gie you pleasure." She then stalked away, with such a solidity of step, and length of stride, as to give Edward the idea of a female Hercules.

"This Peg Dornan," said O'Halloran, "is one of the most forward beggars in this part of the country, whereas our friend Saunders, here, is one of the most modest pensioners that ever lived on the public bounty."

The old man's face seemed to redden a little at this remark; and again wishing God to bless them, he bade them good evening, and ascending the glen a little farther, disappeared among the bushes.

When he left the party, to an inquiry of Edward, O'Halloran replied, that the old man's habitation was in the side of a hill, at the upper extremity of the glen, and only a short distance off. "It is about five years," he continued, "since he came to this part of the country. As I found him to be a sensible man, and even somewhat of a literary disposition, I, at one time prevailed on him to open a regular school; but being rather of a melancholy temper, and fond of solitude, he, in a few months, gave up that employment and retired to this glen, where he now leads altogether the life of a hermit. He has become much esteemed in the neighbourhood, having rendered himself very useful to the people by teaching their children, and advising them in their perplexities. So that a number of them are as punctual in sending to his habitation their weekly donations as if he had a legal claim upon them. I have myself wished to enjoy more of his society than he appears inclined to permit, and when curiosity has, at any time, prompted me to make any inquiries into the history of his life, I have been always checked by the reserve he has ever shown on that subject, although he is communicative on every other. After sunset he never admits any one into his dwelling, otherwise we might visit him, and you would be sure of a kindly reception."

Moving in the direction of the castle, they had nearly reached the outer gate, when a horseman overtook them at full speed, and delivering a packet to O'Halloran, rode off again without saying a word. As soon as they entered, O'Halloran hastily broke the seal, and evidently, with some emotion glanced over the contents. Then informing Ellen that he must be absent for a few hours, and desiring that a light and some refreshments should be left in his library to await his return, he bade Edward good night, and hastily withdrew.

On finding himself alone with Ellen, Edward felt much embarrassed. Silence for a few moments ensued. At length he made an effort, and approaching Ellen, remarked—

"It is a remarkable circumstance, Miss O'Halloran, that when the emotions of the heart are most acute, the capability of expressing them is the most difficult."

"Sir," said Ellen, hesitatingly, "your observation, I believe, is just. Moderate emotions may be expressed without effort, but strong and extraordinary feelings require language correspondingly strong to do them justice."

"And, therefore," resumed Edward, "not at all times to be commanded. How well, Miss O'Halloran, have you accounted for the difficulty of speech, under which I now labour? My sensations, since I first saw you, have been of that extraordinary character, of which common language can convey but a feeble idea."

"Mr Middleton," she replied, "the extraordinary and almost fatal circumstances, under which your acquaintance with my grandfather, commenced, being still recent, may very well account for the extraordinary feelings you mention. You are still feeble from your late accident. Neither your strength of body, nor tone of mind, is yet recovered; and, consequently, occurrences seem strange, and make an impression on you that, in other circumstances, you would have scarcely noticed."

"I cannot, Miss O'Halloran, attribute my present agitation, in the slightest degree, to this cause. I scarcely feel the worse for the accident, and am persuaded that I should in a short time forget it altogether, were it not for the feelings of gratitude and admiration for your grandfather and yourself, that it has excited, and which, believe me, it shall be the study of my life never to forget. Oh! how happy I should be, if I only enjoyed the confidence, the favourable opinion of persons, to whom I am so much indebted and who shall be for ever so dear to me!"

"That favourable opinion," she observed, "we are never in the habit of withholding from those [illegible] think deserving of it. Hitherto our impressions concerning you, are, I believe, as much in your favour as you could wish; and until you do something to forfeit our esteem, of which I am not afraid, I can almost assure you that you shall enjoy it."

Edward was about thanking her for her kind sentiments, and vowing never to forfeit them, by any voluntary thought, word, or action of his life, when he was prevented by a servant entering with the tea equipage. During the time they sat at table, although not an expression was uttered by either of them in the presence of the servant, that might not have been dictated by mere politeness, their thoughts ran more upon each other, than upon the whole world besides. Many a stolen glance they mutually detected, and many a tender thought was only half-expressed

lest it should be expressed with all the tenderness with which it was conceived.

After tea, Ellen, afraid of a renewal of the love conversation, proposed to call up Arthur O'Neil, the harper, who had, for several months past, generally attended two evenings in the week, for the purpose of instructing her on that instrument. Although at that moment, perhaps, Edward would have preferred an arrangement which would have given him her company alone, he acceded to the proposal. He was rejoiced at the opportunity of seeing the only individual then living of that venerable race, whose profession had once been so respectable in Ireland; and he seized the occasion to enlarge on a subject dear to the heart of Ellen, and gratifying to his own, the praise of the bards of their native country.

He was observing that no country had ever possessed a race of men who so much excelled in all the tenderness and pathos of music, or who had produced strains of sentiment so much calculated to affect the heart, when the old, blind musician appeared, led by a boy whom he kept to attend him. He was struck with his appearance. He looked upon him as a remnant of antiquity, and was ready not only to pay him respectful attention, but to yield him all that veneration and homage which was once yielded to the bards of Tara.

After an introduction to Edward, in which the usual Irish salutation of "God bless you," was not forgotten by the venerable minstrel, he adjusted himself to his harp, and began the beautifully sweet air of the "Black-bird." When he had done, he asked Ellen if she had committed to memory the verses to that air, which he left with her on his last visit. On her replying that she had fulfilled his desire in this instance, he expressed a wish that she should sing them, while he accompanied her voice on the harp.

She had scarcely seated herself to the harp when a servant entered with the following note, which he delivered to Edward:—

"The old man whom Mr Middleton met in the glen this evening, and to whom his benevolence prompted him to offer charity, solicits the favour of an interview. He shall wait for him at the place were the late rencontre happened until ten o'clock."

Edward immediately obeyed the summons, telling Ellen that he had occasion to go but a short distance, and did not expect to be long absent.

On arriving at the place mentioned he found the Recluse, true to his appointment. "Follow me," said he to Edward; and he led the way up the glen until they came to a cavern, which the latter said was the entrance of his abode.

When they entered a few yards, they were stopped by what Edward supposed to be the solid rock at the farthest extent of the cavern; but the Recluse, taking a key from his pocket, soon opened a door which the darkness had prevented Edward from seeing.

They now entered a large clean apartment with a well baked earthen floor, at one side of which blazed a large turf fire. It also contained several chairs, a table, a large lumber-chest, a few working utensils, a large old-fashioned bureau, and several mats of straw heaped on each other for a bed, and covered with bed-clothes looking extremely clean and comfortable.

"You are welcome to my habitation," said the old man.

"Why, really," replied Edward, "you have a more comfortable

welling beneath the surface of the earth than many I have seen above it."

"As to that, you have as yet only seen one portion of my abode. I shall now introduce you to another, and you will be aware of the confidence I repose in you when I tell you that you are the second individual living to whom I have ever opened its door."

He then approached what Edward supposed to be the large bureau, and touching a concealed spring in one side of it, it flew open and displayed to view a handsome parlour, lighted with two wax candles, having a boarded floor, and plastered and ceiled in the neatest manner. Edward's astonishment was still more increased, when advancing, he perceived at the farther end a large and elegant assortment of books, arranged along shelves which seemed to have been erected in a temporary manner for the purpose of containing them.

"The surprise I perceive in your countenance," said the old man, "is natural. But sit down, and I shall in part account for what you see by stating that I am not the person which to the world I appear to be. I have met with misfortunes, Mr Barrymore. Do not startle. I know your name, and about five years ago received some civilities from you at Trinity College. You were then, to be sure, less firmly made than at present, but I think I cannot be mistaken as to your identity with the individual to whom I allude."

Edward acknowledged the identity, and confided to the old man his motives for concealing his real name from O'Halloran's family. The old man approved of them.

"You have entrusted me with a secret which I shall keep," said he. "I shall now entrust you with one of more importance. Indeed, it was for this purpose I requested this interview. Yours is one only of a temporary nature; mine involves very serious interests. It is calculated to affect no less than the life of a man whom we both highly esteem. But it is from a regard to that life that I entrust you with it. By enlisting your family influence in favour of this person, I foresee that it will be one day in your power to contribute to his safety. To him you owe the preservation of your life; to him you are, therefore, bound by gratitude; but there is, as you have just now confessed, another tie which binds you to his interests; for the filial affection of his granddaughter, I am convinced, is so strong that she would never survive his public execution. Ah! sir, I tremble for that young lady when I think of the danger into which the ardent but mistaken patriotism of O'Halloran is likely to bring him. I thank that Providence which threw you in my way before the cloud had burst; and I look upon it as a favourable omen, which bids me hope that Ellen Hamilton and Henry O'Halloran, the two dearest objects I have on the earth, shall survive the fury of that storm under which thousands are doomed to fall."

Edward was affected with the Recluse's fervency. He assured him that he would at any time be ready to undertake anything that should contribute to the safety of O'Halloran and the happiness of Ellen.

"I am satisfied on that head," said the Recluse: "yet I cannot but think that your conscience will scruple at enlisting your services in behalf of a man whom you will be inclined to look upon as a traitor to his country."

"I indeed acknowledge my admiration of the excellences of the British

constitution," replied Edward. "But, whatever may be my opinions on this subject, depend upon it, they can never alter my affection for the interesting family to whom I owe so much. Still, I hope that Mr O'Halloran has not acted so as to deserve the severe epithet of traitor, which you have applied to him."

"Would to God!" said the Recluse, "that I were unjust in applying that epithet to him. That it does not amount to treason to be a United Irishman, I am aware; and if my friend were only such, I should neither feel the uneasiness, nor give you trouble concerning him, which I now do."

"I am ignorant," said Edward, "of the designs of the United Irishmen. But I am aware that their association has occasioned a great deal of disturbance in the country; but of this you may be satisfied, that nothing you can tell me, of a merely political nature, shall lessen my esteem for our friend, or alter my resolution to serve him, if ever Providence shall so order it that I may have the power."

"This," said the Recluse, "is the point I wished to gain. I shall not, therefore, hesitate to communicate all I know concerning O'Halloran's connections with this association. Among the United Irishmen there are numbers of virtuous characters, and, at the commencement of the society, it was joined by men of the purest patriotic and constitutional principles. The avowed object of its founders was only to unite all classes of Irishmen, without regard to religious distinction, in exertions to obtain those rights, and the redress of those grievances which the volunteers had failed to obtain.

"Some of the leaders of the volunteers, and other men of restless and active dispositions, and many, no doubt, from the purest motives, determined to persist in urging their claims; and, since they were forbidden to arm as a public body, they resolved to arm as a secret society. Mr O'Halloran, who had been a leader among the volunteers, became active in recruiting for the new establishment, which, at its origin, was hardly considered in any other light than as a substitute for that which had been so arbitrarily and unwisely suppressed.

"Unfortunately the French revolutionists began at this time successfully to propagate their doctrines throughout Europe. Numbers of their emissaries were scattered over Ireland, and in consequence of their exertions, a spirit of innovation upon every kind of ancient establishment spread itself rapidly among the people. This was, however, somewhat checked by the seeming spirit of conciliation which the ministry of Britain manifested in sending the Earl Fitzwilliam, a man who was known to be friendly to the popular wishes, as viceroy to the country.

"Happy it would have been for the people, and happy also for the government, had he been permitted to remain at the head of our affairs; but, unfortunately, his successor, Lord Camden, has adopted a different system of government. To Camden's ill-fated and ill-managed administration, the whole of the evils that now overspread the land are to be attributed.

"The captivity and sufferings of William Orr, a respectable man of this county, who has been since September last immured in prison, among many other instances of mis-government, have contributed much to excite the present incalculable and fearful degree of irritation which has seized the minds of the people of this province.

"Among the most zealous for revenge upon the oppressors of the country, we may consider our friend, Mr O'Halloran. Excited by the integrity of his nature to a hatred of every species of injustice, and being fearless and persevering in whatever cause he embarks in, he has taken a lead in the existing conspiracy, not, like many others, from selfish views, but from the purest motives—from his ideas of duty, and from his feelings of benevolence and patriotism."

"Is there any system of insurrection yet organised?" inquired Edward.

"There is no time, I believe, yet fixed upon for taking the field, but they have given up all idea of again applying to government for a redress of grievances, and appear resolved to trust to arms alone for the success of their cause."

The Recluse now gave Edward an account of numerous instances of misrule and oppression committed by the government, and of the violent measures frequently resorted to by the United Irishmen in retaliation, throughout the northern parts of the country. At length, Edward took leave of the old man, with a promise not to depart from the neighbourhood until he should have another interview with him on the subject.

On his way to the castle, his heart, distracted with sorrow and with love, became overpowered with his emotions, and before he knocked for admittance at the gate, which, at that hour of the night, was always closed, he retired into a little arbour behind the porter's lodge, to give vent to his feelings. He had scarcely entered, when a coarse voice called out, "Wha comes there?" which he immediately conjectured to be the voice of Peg Dornan.

"Is this you, Peg?" was the reply.

She started to her feet, muttering, "In the name o' Gude! what brings you here at this hoor of the nicht? Surely you ha' na' been out exercising wi' the crappies. Poor lads! they maun aye tak' the dark covering o' the nicht to be drilled, for fear o' the blackguard informers, or the king's red-coats, that would shoot them or hang them without mercy. The de'il tak' them!"

"Is this where you make your bed at nights, Peg?" said Edward.

"Sometimes, sir; ony place does Peg Dornan."

At this moment they heard the sound of voices approaching.

"It's his honour," said Peg, looking out at the entrance of the arbour, "an' anither I dinna ken, gaun to the castle. Na doubt they're talking politics. I ne'er fash my head wi' sic things, except to sing a crappy song noo an' then, an' to wish Gude to bless the cause, be it richt or wrang."

The speakers were now so near, that Edward could distinctly hear O'Halloran saying to his companion, "We have now upwards of a hundred thousand men sworn to us in this province, and, I think, we might have things prepared for a general rising as soon as your government can effect the landing of ten thousand troops on any part of the coast. My last letters from the Dublin Directory inform me, that in the various parts of the kingdom there are upwards of three hundred thousand United Irishmen and Defenders ready to take the field at the first signal!" To this, the other answered—"Our government has the interest of your country much at heart, and if our transports can only escape the fleets of Britain, you may rely on receiving the number of troops promised at the stipulated time."

The sounds now died away, and the increasing distance of the speakers prevented Edward from hearing more. The fact that French aid, in order to assist in separating Ireland from England, was negotiated for by the leaders of the United Association, was now to him no longer questionable; and that the only parent of his Ellen, the preserver of his life, was deeply implicated in this traitorous and dangerous measure sunk heavily to his heart, and impressed him with such a degree of vexation and sorrow, as he had never before experienced.

"I will disturb you no longer, Peg," said he; "when I stumbled in here, I did not expect that the place was previously occupied."

"Guid nicht!" she cried, "and Gude be wi' you; an' thank ye for the money—I had na' sae muckle this twalmonth afore."

CHAPTER III.

When Edward had retired to bed, and begun to ruminate on the distracted and dangerous state of the country, he found sleep to be utterly out of the question.

The day was dawning, and as it was in vain for him to seek again for repose, he wandered to the garden, which was situated at a small distance from the castle. It was a lovely May morning. A thousand warblers saluted the rising sun from the trees and hedges around him. Absorbed in contemplation, he moved slowly along the garden walks, amidst a profusion of cowslips, daisies, hyacinths, and numerous other flowers that scented the air all around, and from the leaves and petals of which were suspended myriads of pearly globules, glittering in the early beams of the eastern sun. This soothing walk calmed the perturbation of his spirits, and he was enabled to meet O'Halloran in a more unembarrassed manner than he expected.

After breakfast he signified his intention of going to town, in order to give some directions to his servant, observing at the same time, that as he wished to remain a few weeks in the neighbourhood, he should take lodgings at the inn where his horses were kept. O'Halloran invited him to make the castle his home so long as he remained in that part of the country. He declined the invitation, but promised that he should frequently obtrude upon them as a visitor. O'Halloran then expressed his intention of going to town with him, on condition that he would accompany him back to the castle in the evening, a stipulation with which he complied.

On the road O'Halloran introduced the subject of politics. "You are a young man," said he, "I believe of generous sentiments and a liberal mind, and such I have ever found to be possessed of that first of virtues, patriotism. You cannot, therefore, but feel the injustice, cruelty, and despotism with which the government of Britain has always treated this country. We are, however, Mr Middleton, resolved no longer to be her dupes. We feel oppression, and are resolved to endure it no longer. We know the natural rights of men, and shall assert them in the face of our enemies; and it is the duty of every true Irishman to assist in such a cause—a cause which cannot but obtain the approbation of heaven and be successful."

"My friend," replied Edward, "of all accusations, I should wish to avoid that of being indifferent to the welfare of my country. I feel that Ireland has not a son who more fervently desires her prosperity than I do. I have seen her distresses, and I have grieved for them. I grant that our government has often been wrong; but everything human is liable to error, and our government is human. We should have been content with applying, in a legal manner, for redress. Ah! my heart is sore to think of the state to which matters have been carried. The administration has been unwise, and the people imprudent. The one is obstinate, and the other rash; and, in all probability, it will require a deluge of blood to extinguish their mutual animosity."

They had now arrived at Larne. It happened to be the monthly yarn-market-day, and the market for May in that town is always the largest in the year. After making their way, with some difficulty, through the crowd, they at length reached the inn where Edward's servant had put up. They entered a small room where two decent-looking countrymen were adjusting the payment of some linen cloth. After an interchange of civilities with Edward and O'Halloran, he that received the money insisted on calling for something to treat his companion, and immediately rapping aloud on the table with a small wooden mallet called a *bruiser*, an instrument used in mixing punch throughout the north of Ireland, a young girl quickly appeared.

"Bring us half a pint of Innishown, with some sugar and water," said the linen seller. Edward wondered at the quantity ordered at once for only two individuals. But as soon as the materials arrived, he found that although O'Halloran and he had not been formally asked to accept a share, they had been provided for in the countryman's calculation. The linen dealers immediately applied themselves to their glasses, and O'Halloran without hesitation followed their example; but Edward declined, until he saw that it was necessary for the sake of civility to comply, which he did, however, sparingly.

The conversation now turned upon politics; and Edward soon perceived that his two new companions were United Irishmen; for seeing him in the company of O'Halloran, they took no pains to conceal their sentiments in his presence.

Edward, as soon as he could, withdrew. He was followed by O'Halloran, who invited him to take a ramble through the streets, in order to witness the humours of a northern Irish yarn market.

They had not gone far until Edward perceived the scene diversified by the tents of hawkers, erected on the sides of the streets, in which were vended a great variety of haberdashery, cutlery, &c.

Turning a corner near the market house, he perceived, to the left, a man elevated on a table, selling waistcoat patterns and shawls by auction, and bawling lustily in order to attract customers. On the other side of the street, an old female ballad-singer exerted her lungs, at a most powerful rate, in successful opposition to the auctioneer.

The coarse jests of the one, and the ludicrous gestures of the other, were in complete rivalry. The ballad-singer however, seemed to attract the greater attention, perhaps owing to her subject, which was of a political nature, giving an account of the trial, death, and heroism of four militiamen who had been lately shot for treasonable practices, at Blarris-Moor, near Belfast.

It has been asserted that the prevalence of those songs did more to increase the number of conspirators than all the efforts of the French emissaries, or the writings and harangues of all the political philosophers, and age of reason men of the times.

When Edward had listened to a few stanzas of this song, he perceived Dr Farrel, his physician, approaching, who saluted him with great cordiality. Edward, who really esteemed this gentlemen for his good sense and urbanity of manners, returned the salutation with unfeigned pleasure. The three gentlemen had not walked far together, until O'Halloran was taken aside by a square built, stout-looking man in the habit of a traveller, who desired to converse with him in private. Edward, and the doctor therefore walked on, while O'Halloran and the stranger went off in a different direction.

A recruiting party of soldiers now passed them, for whom the crowd made way without seeming to pay them the slightest attention in any other respect. Far different was their deportment to a party of rope-dancers and equestrian performers, who next advanced mounted on their well-taught steeds, with trumpets sounding, and preceded by a *Pickle Herring*, whose antic grimaces and low jests excited frequent peals of laughter among the assembled multitude. It was with some difficulty that Edward and his companion kept their ground until this splendid and noisy procession had gone past; when, proceeding onwards, they came to the tent of an itinerant dealer of haberdashery, at the one end of which sat a group of well-dressed country girls. Edward immediately knew one of them to be his acquaintance, Peggy Caldwell; and while the doctor's attention was drawn to a fine noble-looking horse which a jockey was putting through his paces at some distance, he approached her.

"Miss Caldwell," said he "I am glad to meet with you here. Is there anything within this tent I can have the pleasure of bestowing upon you, in token of my gratitude for your attention to me during my confinement in your father's house?"

"I believe, sir," she replied, somewhat abashed, "it would be wrong in me to take any present from you."

"You will gratify me," said Edward, in a persevering manner, "by receiving some gift as a testimony of my regard for you."

"Hold!" cried a loud determined voice behind him, "gentle or simple, you shan't affront Miss Caldwell in my presence."

"Who are you?" demanded Edward, as he turned round and beheld an active-looking young fellow, whose countenance indicated that he felt an offence, and was determined to resent it. "Who are you who dare address me so rudely in the public street?"

"As to that," said the other, "I will let you feel wha I am, gin ye' dare to affront that young woman again in my hearing. She's no o' the kind you tak' her to be."

"I am as incapable of insulting that young woman as you, or any other of her friends can be," returned Edward, "but I am capable and determined to punish any unprovoked rudeness that may be offered to myself."

Peggy here interfered, and explained to the young man that the gentleman had not offended her; that he was the person whom Mr O'Halloran had saved from drowning, and on whom she had attended when he was confined in her father's house. The doctor now advanced, for he hadoverheard part of the altercation.

"What is the matter, Jemmy?" said he to the young man.

"Naething," replied Jemmy, "I see I mistook the thing; and I beg the gentleman's pardon. I was owre hasty. But I hope his honour an' you will oblige me, by coming wi' Peggy and the ither lasses, to tak' share o' half a pint, an' mak up the matter."

"Since your acknowledgment is as candid as your attack was unprovoked," said Edward, "I shall drink to our reconciliation; but it shall only be on condition that Peggy previously receives from me some donation as I before proposed, and you, yourself, may choose it for her."

A silk shawl, alternately striped with green, white, and red, an arrangement of colours then much affected by the United Irishmen, was accordingly purchased for Peggy, and the party immediately retired into the next public house, every room of which was so completely filled with people that they could scarcely find seats.

By-and-by, as the company in the various parts of the room began to grow noisy, which, as the country people had now commenced setting themselves thoroughly to their cups, was soon the case, Edward and the doctor thought proper to withdraw.

The doctor being called away on professional business, Edward returned to the inn where his servant staid. Here he found O'Halloran and the stranger who had some hours before taken him aside on the street. They were sitting, one at each end of a table, in an angle of a tolerably large room, which, like every other in the house at that juncture, was quite full of people enjoying the convivial cup with great mirth and good humour. Edward observed that his friend and the stranger were the most silent people in the room, and he was surprised to find that O'Halloran, although he was evidently on an intimate footing with the stranger, never named him. The latter was wrapped in a great-coat, booted and spurred, and held in his hand a huge horseman's whip, heavily loaded with lead. He appeared to be about forty years of age, slightly pock-pitted, very muscular and broad-shouldered, full five feet ten inches high, with small grey eyes and heavy eyebrows. There was something very daring, and at the same time very gloomy in his countenance. He sat with his back to the wall seemingly abstracted in deep meditation, with his hat drawn forward over his face so as partly to conceal it. O'Halloran appeared also to be rather in a thoughtful mood, although there was something of satisfaction visible in his countenance.

He was proposing to Edward to return home, when the attention of the company was attracted by the arrival of two dragoons at the door of the inn, with intelligence of an alarming nature from Belfast.

They gave an account of the assassination of one M'Bride, an informer, which had taken place in that town the preceding evening, by means, it was conjectured, of an air-gun, no report having been heard, although the deceased was shot dead on the spot. They produced some printed hand-bills describing the persons of the supposed perpetrators, and offering a reward of five hundred pounds for the apprehension of each. They said that parties of the military had been despatched in all directions in search of them, and that they had come on the northern route for that purpose.

The whole inn now became a scene of confusion, occasioned by the multitude rushing in to obtain particular information of the affair. This confusion continued until the arrival of George M'Claverty, Esq., the

principal acting magistrate of the neighbourhood. He stationed some soldiers to guard the doors, until he should examine every suspicious person in the house, and compare him with the descriptions in the hand-bills.

The stranger had disappeared on the first arrival of the horsemen. Edward, therefore, was almost the only person in the house totally unknown to the magistrate. He was accordingly very particular in scrutinizing him. The first description was read:—Five feet ten inches—that was nearly Edward's height—Firm made, and very muscular—he was the former, but not the latter. Still so far it might do—Slightly pock-pitted—Edward had only one or two traces of the small-pox. Full-chested—he was portly enough in his appearance. All this might answer. Forty years of age—here the description was totally out. Edward did not appear to be much above twenty. Reddish straight hair—here the application altogether failed. Edward's hair was black, and somewhat curled.

"Well!" said the magistrate, "let us see the other description:—Five feet high—That won't do. Stoop shouldered—That won't do either. Young man, what is your name?"

"Middleton, sir."

"Where do you come from?"

"From the neighbourhood of Dublin."

"A rather seditious neighbourhood! What is your business in the north?"

"Curiosity, sir."

"An extremely suspicious employment! Is there any one here who knows you?"

"Mr O'Halloran, sir."

"A rather suspicious—I was going to say seditious acquaintance. Mr O'Halloran, I beg your pardon! Although as yet we have no information against you sufficient to warrant your committal, we have heard enough to render you suspected. I am sorry for it, as I know you are in other respects a worthy enough character."

"I thank you," said O'Halloran "for your favourable opinion. As to this gentleman, if my report in his behalf will not be taken perhaps that of Dr Farrell will."

"If Dr Farrell says that he is a true man," replied the magistrate, "I will immediately crack a bottle of wine with him to his Majesty's health, and you will join us, I hope, Mr O'Halloran. The king has not a better subject in his dominions than the doctor."

The doctor soon made his appearance, and having declared his opinion in favour of Edward's loyalty, the wine was introduced by the magistrate's order. Edward immediately filled a glass to the king's health, and drinking it, started to his feet.

"Mr M'Claverty," said he, "you are an entire stranger to me, and I now find you on an important official duty, inquiring after the perpetrators of a shocking murder. These circumstances amply excuse, if they do not quite justify the manner in which you have accosted me. If you have done with your interrogatories, however, I shall now, if Mr O'Halloran accompanies me, withdraw. Should you want me at any time within the space of eight days, you shall find me either at this inn or at my friend's castle."

He then retired with O'Halloran, and immediately ordered out their

horses. While they were getting ready, Tom Mullins took Edward aside, with a face of great importance.

"Master," said he, "I want to ask your honour, would it be right to be made a croppy? Here is a very good friend of mine, they call Tom Darragh, who says it will make a man of me; and that every true Irishman ought to be *united*."

"Tom!" said Edward, "I desire you not to converse with any of the people you suspect to be united, especially if they attempt to seduce you into their confederacy. It would be the next thing to becoming a rebel to join them."

"And haven't you been *put up*, master?"

"Mullins!" demanded Edward rather angrily, "has any one had the audacity to tell you so?"

"Why, sure sir, didn't Darragh himself, who says he knows all about these matters, tell me so not two hours ago. He said he could swear that the old gentleman you came here with had done it. 'Well,' said I, 'if you can swear that, I'll be *put up* too.' So we got a pint of whisky, and when we had drunk a couple of rounds to ould Ireland and St Patrick, he went away to get a Bible, and was bidding me stand on my feet to take the oath, when the horsemen came, and we both ran to the door to see what the crowd meant."

"So you have not yet taken the oath?" said Edward.

"No. sir; and it just came into my head when I saw you here that I would ask your honour about it, for I thought that if you were *up* yourself, you would know whether there was any good in it."

"I am not *up*, as you call it," said Edward. "I am no United Irishman; and hear me, Tom, the moment I know you to be one, I shall dismiss you from my service."

"Arrah, master, don't be angry; for if it displeases you, I won't take the oath for one of them."

After a few more cautions on the subject, and also with regard to secrecy concerning himself, Edward left Tom, and set off with O'Halloran for the castle. They rode on in silence, until they were nearly a mile from town, when Edward observed, that the market scenes were very amusing; but that in this instance, any satisfaction he had experienced was more than counterbalanced by the unpleasant intelligence of the horrible murder that had been committed in Belfast.

"Sir," said O'Halloran, "Killing for self-preservation is surely no murder; and it was certainly meritorious to destroy a traitor whose longer existence would have been the destruction of hundreds."

At this moment the stranger who had engrossed so much of O'Halloran's company during the day, galloped down a lane from a farmhouse, and joined them on the road. Edward had observed this man leaving the inn very hastily the instant the dragoons were announced. This circumstance had excited a vague suspicion that he might be one of the assassins; this suspicion almost rose to certainty, when he read the first description, that the magistrate had attempted to apply to himself. On his approach now, Edward was more particular in observing him, and was forcibly struck with the exact correspondence of his person with the description in all its traits. He made a bow to Edward, which he returned coolly, for his soul shuddered at the idea of being in company with a murderer.

"M'Cauley," said O'Halloran, "the minions of government are now on the alert to discover those brave fellows who have avenged their country, and saved upwards of two hundred of her patriots from the gallows, by the destruction of the perjured M'Bride. Their suspicion falls upon every stranger, and they were likely, before we left town, to give some trouble to this gentleman."

"I suppose," said M'Cauley, "your magistrate, M'Claverty, is very zealous on this occasion. But it may yet be so much the worse for him."

No reply was made, and silence continued until they were within a mile of the castle. M'Cauley then stopped suddenly.

"Mr O'Halloran," said he, looking at the same time earnestly in Edward's face, for the whole three had stopped, "if I may judge from appearance, your friend here possesses too much honour to betray a man who reposes so much confidence in him as to entrust him with his life."

O'Halloran replied, that he had every reliance on Edward's honour but—

"No *buts*, said the other; if he is a man of honour, he shall know who I am, let his views of my conduct be what they may. Young man," continued he, addressing Edward, "you see before you one whose whole heart and soul is devoted to his country; and who, to avenge her cause upon a traitor, has not scrupled to offend human laws past forgiveness; and perhaps, in the opinion of many good men, has also violated the laws of heaven. Of this, however, he can assure you, his own conscience applauds the deed. In short, I have destroyed M'Bride, the informer, before he got his traitorous designs accomplished; and should the gallows be my reward, I shall there glory in the deed."

The magnanimity of M'Cauley made a strong impression on Edward. He deplored his infatuation, he condemned his crime, but he admired his devoted fidelity to the cause he had espoused. He assured him, that although he would rather not have been entrusted with his secret, he should have no cause to repent the confidence he had placed in him.

O'Halloran's countenance brightened at this assurance, and with more than usual spirits, he led the way to the castle.

On entering, Edward was introduced to an inmate of the castle whom he had not before seen. This was the only sister of O'Halloran, who had been some weeks absent, and had just returned a few hours before, accompanied by a Miss Agnew, at whose father's house she had been visiting. The old lady was remarkably intelligent, active and cheerful, for her time of life. She was older than her brother; and might now be about her sixty-fifth year. At the early period of her life she enjoyed the sweets of matrimony for about five years; but her husband, who was an extensive merchant in Belfast, was drowned on a voyage to Liverpool. His name was Brown, and, although they never had children, they were tenderly attached to each other.

Miss Agnew was a pretty, lively, rosy-cheeked girl of nineteen, who had lately finished a boarding-school education, and possessed an easy, gay sort of familiarity in her manner, which was far from displeasing. She was occasionally fond of indulging in a sportive kind of wit, approaching to what is vulgarly termed *quizzing*. This, however, if we except a little coquetry, which was natural to her, was her only foible,

for she was in reality a well-informed and well-bred handsome girl, with a fortune of five thousand pounds at her own disposal, bequeathed to her several years before by a deceased uncle.

This accession to the castle party was highly pleasing to Edward, as it promised not only to be the means of preventing politics from engrossing the conversation, but of affording him more of Ellen's society, who would not be so shy of her company when it would be only sought for in the presence of her female friends.

Shortly after dinner, O'Halloran rose from table, and, requesting M'Cauley to accompany him, withdrew.

"Poor man!" said Mrs Brown, when her brother had retired, "Ireland had never a warmer friend; and if his power were equal to his wishes, there would not be an unhappy individual within the limits of her four provinces. Mr Middleton, I do not know your political sentiments, but I shall have no hesitation in telling you mine. I wish earnestly for the peace and prosperity of my country, without respect to her form of government, and have no objection to live under the protection of the British constitution, except when that protection degenerates into oppression, which to our fatal experience, we find that it frequently does."

"Madam," replied Edward, "if you can only answer me one question in the affirmative, I shall be happy to find my opinion on these matters corroborated and sanctioned by yours. Do you not think that conspiracy, treason, and civil war, not to speak of midnight burnings, and assassinations, are injudicious and unjustifiable methods of correcting the misgovernments, which we all acknowledge to have but too much prevailed of late years in this country?"

"I do," was the reply.

"Then, we agree," said Edward.

"Since that is the case," said Miss Agnew, "we have no occasion to talk more on this horrible subject. I never hear it discussed, but it throws me into the vapours. Suppose Ellen gives us a song; perhaps it may do me good. Let us have one of Mr M'Nelvin's, and I'll try to touch the tune on the piano."

As her aunt and Edward joined in this request, Ellen complied, remarking that, as she was not in good enough spirits to give then an air sufficiently lively to counteract the disorder of which Miss Agnew complained, she would sing them some verses which were lately put into her hands by a friend of hers, who had once been an exile from his native country, and who, to relieve the pain of absence from all he loved, had frequently recourse to the consolations of the muse.

"I am still melancholy," said Miss Agnew, drawing a long sigh when Ellen had done singing, "I am still melancholy, but it is now a melancholy of a sweeter nature than I felt before. Oh! how pleasant it would have been to have wandered on the banks of the Ohio with your poet, when he produced those verses? But pray, dear, won't you tell us who is the author?"

"He is a man," replied Ellen, "whose present station in the world almost approaches that of a mendicant"

"A very poetical station, truly!" said Miss Agnew.

"But although," continued Ellen, "he has the garb, he never exhibits the meanness of a beggar."

"That is still more poetical," said Mrs Brown.

"And although," Ellen again continued, "he has now the gravity and wisdom of sixty, he possesses all the warm-heartedness and enthusiastic benevolence of twenty."

"That is most poetical of all," said Edward.

"This person," resumed Ellen, "whom you have all pronounced to be so poetical, is no other than our Recluse, old Saunders."

"I shall visit him to-morrow," said Miss Agnew, "for I won't be easy till I pay my respects to his bardship."

"But hush!" cried Mrs Brown, "who is yon? Hah! it is Peg Dornan's coarse voice."

"Is the bonny young Dublin gentleman within?" was vociferated from the brazen lungs of Peg, to a servant in the hall.

"He is. What do you want with him?" was demanded.

"I want to see himsel'. I'll tell my errand to naebody else. An' I maun to see him soon, whare'er he be."

Edward went immediately to the hall. "What is the matter, Peg?" said he.

"Come awa', sir, wi' me, and ye'll ken a' about it, belyve."

He followed her without hesitation till they came near the mysterious rock, from which he first saw Ellen and her grandfather.

"They're gaen in noo," said Peg, "but when they come oot they'll maybe talk o't again. Ye maun wait here, gin ye want to hear them; an' it concerns you nearly. I'll awa', but lie ye doon amang thir bushes, and watch them; they'll come close this way."

He had not lain long, until M'Cauley and a stranger appeared advancing from the rock. When they approached within a few yards of him, at a place where two paths crossed each other, they stopped.

"Tell me before we part," said the stranger to M'Cauley, "what is your intention with respect to this young man to whom you so foolishly entrusted your secret. If he refuses to take the oath, I advise you to dispatch him; for dead men tell no tales."

"I shall be guided by O'Halloran respecting him," answered M'Cauley.

"O'Halloran is too womanish-hearted, to give good advice in this case."

"His advice I shall, nevertheless, abide by. The disclosure was voluntary on my part, and unsolicited by the young man; and I am much deceived, if I cannot confide in his honour, which is already pledged to me, almost as firmly as in his oath."

"Trust no man's honour in these times," said the other. "Happy would it be for our United confederacy, if we had trusted even fewer oaths than we have done. Government would not then have been so well prepared to give us a warm reception, whenever we shall attack it. But here comes O'Halloran himself."

The matter being referred to O'Halloran, he exclaimed, with energy—"Sooner than a hair of his head shall fall, whether he join us or not, you shall pierce me to the heart. He is my guest, and my friend; and I shall protect him as such. Darragh, let us hear no more of this detestable proposal. It makes me shudder to think of it. Such atrocities only tend to weaken the best of causes."

"You are right," said M'Cauley, "and the first man that raises a hand against Mr Middleton makes me his enemy."

"You may act as you please," said Darragh, "but I foretell that this fellow will yet make you repent your forbearance. He must be an Orangeman in his heart. I could have made his servant a United Irishman to-day, but for him; and now the fellow knows that I am one, and no doubt will be ready to inform on me; but, before to-morrow night, I'll make the rascal unfit to tell stories."

"I beseech you," said O'Halloran, "not to be so rash. The poor fellow can be easily persuaded that you intended nothing but sport with him."

"Avast," said Darragh, "that won't do. If he swears to the facts as they took place, an Orange jury and a pensioned judge will never consider whether I was in sport or in earnest."

He broke short the conversation by bidding them good night, in a rather surly tone, and walked off towards the town. O'Halloran and M'Cauley moved towards the rock, and Edward, on whose mind, it will be supposed, the conversation had made a deep impression, returned to the castle. Before he reached it, however, Peg Dornan overtook him.

"Weel, sir, did you hear aucht you didna like?"

"Too much, Peg; but how came you to know anything about it?"

"Why, sir, gin you'll no be in a hurry, I'll tell you," (for Edward's perturbation of mind made him walk very fast). Peg then told him that, lying concealed in the bushes, she had overheard Darragh urging M'Cauley to make away with him, but thinking Edward would not believe her, had brought him to hear for himself.

Edward thanked her for her information, and, enjoining secrecy, gave her half a guinea, and hastened to the castle. As he entered the avenue, he met old Saunders coming out of the gate; and not knowing how to act, he thought it would be proper to consult the old man. Telling him what he had heard, he expressed fears, not for himself, but his servant.

The Recluse, after a few moments' reflection, replied—"Fear nothing for your servant; I shall undertake for his safety."

He then desired Edward to accompany him to William Caldwell's, where they found young Hunter, with Peggy and one of her brothers, just returned from the market. The old man requested Jemmy to go with him and Edward to the glen. On arriving there he communicated to him the danger in which Tom Mullins then stood, and asked him if he would be willing to render Edward a service by rescuing him from it.

"That I will," said he, seizing Edward by the hand. "I'll stand by him; for though I ha' been made a United Irishman, I wasna' made yin to stan' by an' see my friens murdered."

"But you must go quietly about this business," said old Saunders; "we do not wish it to be made public. First, you must make haste and saddle your best riding horse, and return here with him as soon as possible."

In about half an hour Hunter returned, gallantly mounted on a prancing steed, as boldly determined to sally forth in defence of innocence as ever any knight of chivalry was in the days of romance.

Edward gave him a letter for Tom Mullins, and the Recluse a packet of sealed instructions, which he was desired not to open until he should convey Mullins as far as Antrim, about eighteen miles from Larne.

Having received these instructions, he clapped spurs to his horse, and with a light heart and a determined spirit, set swiftly forward on his benevolent errand. He rode so fast that he overtook Darragh, who was on foot, near the entrance of the town.

"What's the matter, Hunter," said Darragh, "that you ride so fast to town at such a late hour?"

"Naething, Tam," replied the other, "but I had to tak' some lasses hame frae the market, and I thought I would come back an' see some mair o' the fun, an' gin you ha' naething better to do, we'll ha' a naggin together."

In pursuance of this resolution, they rapped at the door of the first public house they came to, which they found locked, although there was light enough to be seen, and noise enough to be heard from within, to assure them that the inmates had still sufficient employment to keep them out of bed for some time. After some little parley, they were admitted by a back entrance, and were soon seated with a fuming jug of hot punch before them. Darragh was not slow to tell him of his intention, with regard to Tom Mullins; declaring, "I'll run no risks; I'll send the dog to Lucifer, before I sleep, or my name is not Tom Darragh."

"Surely, Tam," said Hunter, "you would na be sa rash; the man has done na harm yet."

"Nor," exclaimed the other, "shall it be long in his power to do harm."

"Hoot, man! dinna talk this way; it's no safe for me to hear you; you may tak' it into your head to kill me for fear I should tell that you killed him."

"I can trust you, Jemmy; you know that it is in the good cause; and you have sworn not to betray it."

"I never swore not to discover murder if I ken't o't;" replied Hunter with spirit. "But let us hae na mair killing in cauld bluid—we'll hae plenty o't in warm, I'll warrant you, when the time comes."

To these remarks, Darragh made no reply; but sat for some minutes in a rather thoughtful and sulky humour. At last he took Hunter by the hand, told him he believed him to be an honest fellow, that, perhaps, he might take his advice; but that happen what would, he was sure he would not injure him.

Hunter reflecting that he himself was commissioned to prevent the threatened crime from taking place, and conceiving that it was in his power to do so, assured him that he would not inform upon him, for anything that should happen. They then drank another gill together; and retiring from the house by the way they entered it, separated in the street with expressions of mutual good will and confidence.

Hunter then hastened to the Antrim Arms, and procured admission by mentioning the letter he had to deliver to Mullins. He informed the landlord that he should lodge with him all night.

"In the mean time," said he, "let this up-the-country frien' o' mine an' me, hae a jug o' punch in a room by oursels, for I hae some cracks for his ain ear."

This important matter being adjusted, Jemmy produced Edward's letter, and desired Tom to be ready for a journey by day-break. In a short time they retired to rest without Hunter having informed him of

the design of Darragh. In the morning they both rose with the dawn, and, while Hunter went to discharge the landlord's bill, Mullins hastened to prepare the horses. He was not long in the stable until two men presented themselves before him, one holding a pistol and the other a Bible to his breast.

"Swear," said Darragh, who held the pistol, "that you will never inform any one that I wanted to make you a United Irishman, or you are, this instant, a dead man!"

"I will swear anything, fairly," said Mullins, petrified with astonishment, "but, dear gentlemen, only give me time to bless myself."

"We have no time to talk with you!" exclaimed Darragh, "we must be gone; swear this instant, or be shot!" and he raised his arm as if to perform the deed he threatened, when that arm was seized by Hunter, who hearing the last words of the threat, sprung upon him with the force and agility of a lion upon his prey, and threw him upon his back on the ground. The pistol went off in the struggle, and grazing the arm of the man who held the Bible, lodged itself in the wall of the stable.

"By Jasus, he can't hurt me now," cried Mullins; "so you too shall lie down in the dirt with your comrade, my jewel." So saying, he struck the poor Bible-holder such a blow as almost fractured his lower jaw, and fairly prostrated him alongside his companion, while the blood gushed like a torrent from his mouth and nostrils.

The noise soon brought the landlord to the spot, who would have secured Darragh and his companion, in order to have them carried before the magistrate; but on Mullins declaring that he wished for no further revenge, it was agreed to hush the matter up, on condition that Darragh should swear never again to make an attempt on Mullins' life, a condition with which he, in a very surly manner, complied. When this was done he could not, however, disguise the strongly excited malignity of his passions, and, casting a fierce look at Hunter, "I shall yet be revenged!" he ejaculated.

"May God forgive you!" said the good-natured youth, who had heard him. "When your anger cools, I'm sure you'll no' say so."

The victors now set off in conformity to the Recluse's instructions; but they had not gone far before Hunter reflected that an account of the morning's transactions might induce his employers to change their intentions with respect to Mullins, especially as Darragh was now under the obligation of a solemn oath not to molest him. He, therefore, thought it prudent to convey Mullins to the Recluse's cavern, in order to receive further instructions. On arriving there, Hunter hastened to the castle for Edward who, on coming to the cavern and learning the state of affairs, declared to the Recluse his opinion that Darragh would not regard an oath into which he had been frightened; and that, while either he or his servant remained in the neighbourhood, neither of them would be safe from his malignity. He, therefore, desired Hunter to proceed immediately on his journey with Mullins, and mentioned his intention to follow them as soon as he could make a proper excuse to O'Halloran for his hasty departure.

Hunter accordingly set off with his companion, but contrived to go nearly a mile out of his proper course, to give a parting salute to Peggy Caldwell.

Edward and the Recluse were left together in the cavern. The old

man, reluctant as he was to part with our hero, acknowledged the necessity of his withdrawing from that part of the country, since he had become an object of suspicion to some of the United Irishmen.

Edward, in bidding him farewell, besought his care of Ellen. "Promise me," said he," that you will give me frequent and speedy information of whatever may befall her; and that when the storm bursts, you will, if in your power, in this sacred asylum, afford her shelter from its fury. Promise me this, and the weight of anxiety that now oppresses me shall be greatly relieved."

"I not only promise you this," said the Recluse, "but whatever else may be in my power to do for the safety and welfare of Ellen Hamilton."

"Will you consent to be the medium of any communications I may transmit to her?" asked Edward.

"I will," replied the Recluse, without hesitation, "unless she forbids it. But hasten from this dangerous neighbourhood, for here there are active and malignant spirits aroused against you. Farewell, and may the Almighty protect and bless you!"

"Farewell, father," said Edward. He then hastened to apprise O'Halloran of his intended departure, and to seek a farewell interview with Ellen.

The early part of the morning had been somewhat cloudy. The day, however, assumed a brighter aspect, and the advancing sun had dried away all the lucid pearls that had lately bespangled the tender springing grass, the lovely richness of whose verdure has procured for Ireland the appropriate epithet of the Emerald Isle.

Invited by the beauty of the season, and of the weather, Mrs Brown, after breakfast, proposed to the ladies to walk along the meadows that skirted the shore, and lay between the castle and the promontory of Ballygally.

Miss Agnew, introducing Edward's name, bantered Ellen about him, and was only brought to give it up by the approach of the subject of their talk. Mrs Brown was the first to accost him, inviting him to join them in their rambles; an invitation he was not slow to accept.

"How do you like the appearance of our part of the country?" asked Mrs Brown, turning round upon an eminence to which they had arrived, and from which they had a tolerable prospect of the surrounding scenery.

"Every thing in your country," replied Edward, "has had the effect of highly interesting my feelings, and exciting my admiration; but, this morning, I received accounts which constrain me to an almost instantaneous departure, a circumstance which I assure you gives me a heavy heart."

In saying this, he turned his eyes towards Ellen. She attempted to speak, but her voice faltered, while the blood, which but the moment before had spread the bloom of roses on her cheeks, had fled and left them as pale as ivory.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Mrs Brown, who had observed her emotion.

"Nothing," she replied. "I felt suddenly a little dizzy, but I am now better."

"You are weak," said Edward, in agitation, "may I beg permission to support you?"

"Oh! it is not now necessary; I am quite well again."

"We had better return home," said Mrs Brown. "Mr Middleton, will you have the goodness to support her."

Edward again offered his assistance, requesting her to lean on his arm. She hesitatingly complied; but desired her aunt not to forego the pleasure of a longer excursion, as she felt perfectly able to continue it.

"Well, then," said Miss Agnew, "let us try the hill; Mrs Brown and I shall drag each other up—and since you have become an invalid, we will permit you to engross all Mr Middleton's assistance. Come along, Mrs Brown, we had better take a start of them, for you see we are to have no help in the ascent."

So saying, she dragged Mrs Brown onwards, telling her that the two sentimental people behind would follow on the wings of imagination.

"Do not leave us," cried Ellen, "or I shall again be obliged to fatigue myself in hurrying after you."

Whether by accident or design, however, instead of keeping pace with their companions, Edward and Ellen walked so slowly that in a few minutes the others were too far advanced to hear their conversation.

"Ah! Miss O'Halloran," said Edward, who gladly seized so favourable an opportunity of opening his soul to his beloved, "you cannot imagine the pangs that I feel on account of leaving this place, for you are not aware how powerful are the chains that bind me to it."

"You speak of some necessity that compels you to leave us; I hope that necessity includes no misfortune."

"I feel that the greatest misfortune attending my departure is the circumstance itself. My dear Ellen, forgive the expression, but Providence has given me this much-desired opportunity of telling you my whole heart, and I must not let it pass unimproved. You alone are the object that binds me to this spot. Ah! dare I hope that this declaration is not offensive to you? Dare I indulge the expectation that when I am afar off, you will sometimes reflect with complacency on the wanderer who, on seeing you, first saw the object to whom his soul must for ever be devoted."

"Mr Middleton," said Ellen, extremely embarrassed, "is it proper that I should listen to this language?"

"I shall not long trouble you with it," he replied. "I know I am a stranger. It is, therefore, I confess, presumption in me to solicit your confidence, to request your regard without informing you of these particulars. But ah! my beloved, say, has no youth, more fortunate than I, and known to you, and worthy of you, in all these respects, already engaged your affections? If so, I shall not disturb your peace by obtruding on your notice a passion which you cannot return, nor will I endeavour to secure a place in your affections, if that heart is another's."

"Why sir," said she, "do you ask from me such a confession?"

"I have no right, I acknowledge," he replied, "to require any such disclosure from you. Forgive the freedom I have taken."

"Mr Middleton," said she, in a serious tone. "I believe you are a man of honour, and of too much generosity to sport with the feelings of an unoffending and inexperienced girl, merely for the gratification of curiosity or caprice. I feel no offence at your inquiry, although, under present circumstances, it would be highly imprudent to promise a return of those feelings you profess for me. I feel grateful for your preference,

and as a mark of my gratitude, I may inform you that to none of your sex have I ever pledged my affections."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Edward, fervently, "then I may hope. Oh! do not forget me, dearest Ellen, in my absence."

"Hush!" said Ellen, "my aunt and Miss Agnew have turned back for us." This either of them might have seen for several minutes before, had they not been too much engrossed with each other; in other words, had not love rendered them blind. They had made such slow progress during their conversation, that their companions without being aware of it, had advanced nearly half a mile before them, when Mrs Brown turning round observed the distance, and suggested the propriety of returning to meet them.

Miss Agnew and she were in consequence within a few yards of the lovers, when Ellen suddenly observed their proximity and uttered the exclamation, Hush! as before stated.

"You must be very weak, Ellen, otherwise you would have walked faster," said her aunt.

"O dear no!" cried Miss Agnew, "do you not see how strong she looks? We left her as pale as sackcloth, leaning for support on the arm of that gentleman. Now she blushes like a carnation, and appears as if afraid to touch him. Come, Mr Middleton, give me your arm. I am in more need of your assistance, after that long walk, than she is."

"And what assistance must an old frail woman, like me, need, after such a walk, if a young smart chit like you, requires any?" cried Mrs Brown, sportively, and she also caught an arm of Edward, saying, "Ellen has monopolized you long enough; it is now our turn; Miss Agnew and I cannot bear to be longer neglected."

"O dear!" cried Miss Agnew, "do not let us fight about the gentleman. I fear Ellen has not willingly resigned him, and we are intruders.

"I indeed resign him cheerfully," said Ellen; "I am now perfectly recovered, and can ascend the hill without fearing fatigue."

"So can I," cried Miss Agnew; "give me your hand my sprightly maiden," and she seized Ellen for the purpose of dragging her forward on a race."

"You are too wild," said Ellen, slightly restraining her; "when will you become sober?"

"Not till I fall in love," said Miss Agnew, "and then, you know, I shall be as ready to sigh and become pensive and fatigued as yourself."

They were too far removed from Edward and Mrs Brown, for the latter to hear the last remarks, which prevented Ellen from suffering all the confusion it would otherwise have occasioned.

"You insinuate, then, Maria," said she, "that I am in love."

"I am sure of it," said her companion. "No female heart could withstand the partiality which that charming young man shows for you."

"Mad-cap!" said Ellen, "quit this subject. It is all nonsense; but —but what partiality has he shown for me? I am sure you could never have observed any."

"Rare consistence!" cried Maria. "You desire me to drop the subject, and then you ask me a question which compels me to continue it. But this is so characteristic of a love-sick damsel, that it does not surprise me, and, dear Ellen, in pity to you, I will not drag you from the young man's company. It would be cruel, as he is soon to leave us."

She then turned suddenly, and held Ellen, who blushed deeply, from advancing.

"Come on," cried she, "this blushing girl and I would be at the top of the hill in a minute, did we not love our company too well to leave it."

Edward and Mrs Brown approached. They had walked slowly, for they had conversed on the alarming nature of the times, and, short as their discourse had been, Edward could easily perceive that the old lady's feelings rather than her judgment sided with the United Irishmen.

"Ah, Miss Giddyhead, I see what you wish for," cried Mrs Brown aloud, while she advanced to Maria, "here, take Mr Middleton for yourself. You envy every one who has but a few minutes' conversation with him, though I think you need not have become jealous of an old woman of sixty."

"A woman of Mrs Brown's accomplishments and power of conversation, might excite my envy at any age," replied Maria; "but do you think that no other person than Maria Agnew envies you?"

"If there be any one else, she has not, at least, betrayed it so audibly," said Mrs Brown. "What, Mr Middleton," she continued, "do you think of two young women becoming jealous of an old woman enjoying a few moments of your company? You must surely have made a progress in their esteem warmer than the usual esteem of friends."

"I should be proud to excite such an esteem," said he, "but I fear I am not so happy."

In saying this he cast a look at Ellen, who unconsciously returned a glance that spoke peace to his soul.

CHAPTER IV.

Our party having climbed the hill, and for a little enjoyed the view, turned their steps homeward, beguiling the way with talk of the prospects of the country, Ellen taking a very enthusiastic view of these.

Having arrived at the castle, Edward informed O'Halloran of the necessity he was under of immediately leaving the country. The latter startled a little at the intelligence; and, although it was nothing but what he might have expected, he appeared very much confused.

At last recovering his self-possession, "Mr Middleton," said he, "I did not calculate on your leaving us so soon, at least so suddenly; but if the cause of your departure be not extremely urgent, I request that you will not go until to-morrow."

Edward was himself much inclined to remain till the next day. A wish to be introduced to the poet, M'Nelvin, of whom he had heard much in the conversation of his friends, and a desire to spend another night under the same roof with his beloved Ellen, predominated over his prudence; and he yielded to O'Halloran's request. O'Halloran was not unacquainted with the danger which threatened his guest from the violence of Darragh, and some others of the conspirators; and he began to suspect that their threats had reached Edward's ears, and produced his sudden determination to leave the neighbourhood. He himself had some doubts whether the secrets of his party with which this young

stranger had involuntarily become acquainted, were altogether safe in his keeping; and, although he had hitherto resisted the solicitations of his confederates to prevent his departure, by securing his person, lest he should inform upon them, he began now to have serious doubts as to the propriety of his so doing. In great agitation of mind he left Edward, and retired to his library, to reflect on the most proper mode of proceeding. The result was a fixed resolution to prevent Edward's departure. "He must be secured," he soliloquised, "but he must be so treated as to have no privation of which to complain, except the loss of personal liberty."

Having brought his mind to this conclusion, he went in search of M'Cauley, and the other leading conspirators. They soon agreed on a plan for seizing Edward. "A single hair of his head shall not fall," said M'Cauley, "in the course of their deliberation, if I can prevent it; for, I am myself to blame for too rashly communicating to him that information by which he can most seriously injure us."

It was unanimously settled that Edward should be seized that evening, and confined in the Point Cave (which was within the mysterious rock already mentioned), but that he should be there treated with every indulgence the circumstances of the case would admit.

After dinner, the unsuspecting object of these machinations paid a visit to William Caldwell's to make his acknowledgments for the kindness he had experienced from his family, and also with the hope that he might there meet with an opportunity of being introduced to M'Nelvin. In the latter object of his visit, he was, however, disappointed. On his return, he met the Recluse, to whom he stated his wishes on this subject.

"You wish for a gratification," said the old man, "which it will be no easy matter to procure you. But if it be in the power of any one, I think it is in mine. You will, no doubt, be surprised, when I tell you that he whose acquaintance you seek, studiously avoids yours, influenced with regard to you by a delicacy, perhaps I should rather say, a weakness of feeling on a tender point. In short, he loves Ellen Hamilton with a hopeless passion, and he has perceived that you are an ardent, and likely to be a favoured rival. I am the sole confident of his sorrows."

"Perhaps then," said Edward, "it is better I should not see him, for I should feel reluctant to occasion him the smallest pain."

"My friend," replied the hermit, "I should wish you and him to be acquainted with each other, as I know it would increase your mutual esteem. So, if you have no objection, we shall proceed to my cave, where I expect to find him very shortly. It is to him alone besides yourself, that I have entrusted the secret of my inner dwelling; nay, it is to him alone, of all my friends in this neighbourhood, that I have as yet intrusted the story of my misfortunes, a story concerning which even to you, I must, for some time yet, take the liberty of preserving silence."

Edward acquiesced, and they soon arrived at the old man's dwelling. They were not long seated until the secret door in the bureau opened, and M'Nelvin appeared. He seemed somewhat disconcerted on seeing Edward, but at the Recluse's desire he came forward.

"Let me introduce the two most confidential friends I have in this

part of the country to each other," said the old man, and I doubt not, that on further acquaintance they will both thank me for doing so."

Edward approached, and shook the poet's hand so cordially that his reserve almost instantly vanished; and during the conversation which ensued, he became so cheerful and communicative, and displayed such an extent of information and strength of intellect, as surprised and delighted his new acquaintance.

Thus the man whose poetical talents had excited his curiosity, and whose misfortunes he was prepared to pity, Edward found to be possessed of dignity which enforced his respect, and of wisdom which commanded his admiration; and after M'Nelvin had left the cavern, which he did early in the evening, he consulted the Recluse as to any possible way of showing his regard.

"I know at present no other way," said the old man, "than by maintaining a correspondence with him, and perhaps occasionally administering to his poetical vanity: for, like all other poets, he is vain of his profession. Pecuniary assistance must not be mentioned. The inconveniences of poverty, I can and shall prevent."

"I envy you," returned Edward, "the felicity of being permitted to confer favours on such a man. I trust the time will come when I shall enjoy more of both his society and yours under happier circumstances."

He then, after requesting the Recluse to remember his wishes respecting Ellen, bade him adieu, and returned to the castle.

On emerging from the hermit's glen, our hero perceived four men sitting on an eminence near the path by which he was to pass. As he approached, he recognised one of them as his new and undesired acquaintance, M'Cauley, who rose and very respectfully saluted him. "Mr Middleton," said he, "I am glad to meet with you. Will you favour me with your company towards the beach?"

Edward was about to excuse himself on account of the lateness of the hour, when M'Cauley caught him familiarly by the arm, and in a half jocular manner, swore an oath that he would not part with him for that evening at least. Edward remonstrated, and told him that he didn't think it friendly so rudely to impose on his inclinations.

"Mr Middleton, you had as well consent," said the other, "to accompany me. I assure you no harm shall befall you; and you see," he added, looking at his companions, "that we can enforce compliance."

Edward now perceived that foul play was intended, and he demanded by what authority they attempted to detain him.

"By the authority of present strength, and a prudent regard for our own safety," replied M'Cauley.

"And where am I to go, and for what purpose?" was next demanded.

"To our head quarters, to be both well secured and well treated," was the reply.

"Does Mr O'Halloran know this?"

"He does, and its necessity grieves him."

"Then I submit," said Edward. "He once saved my life; he is now welcome to take it from me. Lead where you please."

The four men closed him round, and conducted him to the very spot where O'Halloran and his granddaughter vanished from his sight when he first saw them on the beach.

One of them then ascended a projecting portion of the mysterious rock, and removing a loose piece of stone, which filled a narrow crevice about a foot deep, an iron ring was disclosed, on pulling which an internal bolt gave way, and permitted the upper end of a large, rugged fragment of the rock to separate from the mass with which it before seemed to have been consolidated. M'Cauley then introduced his hand and loosened the end of a rope, which, passing through a pulley fastened to the roof of the cave now visible, had its other end fixed firmly to the centre of the movable fragment, which was thus managed as a door, its base, upon which it turned, being joined to the rock by means of strong hinges, altogether invisible on the outside. The rope being thus loosened, the fragment opened wide enough to afford space for the admission of our party in a stooping posture, but on advancing a few steps, Edward found himself in an apartment full ten feet high, having a smooth hard-beaten artificially-made earthen floor. Through this, he was conducted to another apartment, very spacious, clean-looking, and lighted with several lamps. In its centre there was a large table covered with newspapers, pamphlets, letters, &c., which three genteelly dressed men seemed to have been perusing. These gentlemen accosted Edward in rather a cordial manner, and welcomed him to their habitation. They were quite unknown to him, but one of them he soon perceived from his accent to be a Frenchman. He now saw that he had been ushered into one of the council-chambers of the Northern conspirators. but for what purpose he could not tell, although he was persuaded that it could not be of a friendly nature. Here the men by whom he had been seized left him. By his remaining companions he was politely invited to be seated, and to accept refreshment. Conceiving that there was no use in showing ill-humour on the occasion, he assented, when, to his surprise, tea was speedily produced, with its usual accompaniments, and afterwards punch, of which his companions partook in a spirit of great cordiality.

During the evening politics engrossed less of the conversation than he expected. Literature, agriculture, and manufactures were the prevailing topics. On these, Edward cheerfully took a part, and almost forgot that he was a prisoner. His new acquaintances seemed highly intelligent, and perfectly conversant with every subject they discussed; they were easy and affable, and appeared to make his comfort their chief study. At length one of them, requesting leave to show him where he should rest, when he wished to retire for the night, pushed a sliding-door along one end of the apartment, which disclosed to view a small room resembling the state-room of the cabin of a merchant ship, and containing a bed of a comfortable appearance. On bidding good night, one of the company remarked, "I trust, Mr Middleton, that the cause of your confinement here will soon be removed; but whether it be long or short, you may depend on receiving good usage."

In fact, such is the influence of civil treatment on the mind, that for some time after he was alone, Edward felt more astonishment than irritation at the occurrence of the evening. But when he reflected on the loss of his liberty, and on the share which O'Halloran had in effecting it, and which he looked upon, not only as a breach of honour and hospitality, but from the promise he had extracted from him in the morning, as savouring of treachery itself, he became restless, agitated, irritated; and when he considered that he had done nothing to deserve being

thus incarcerated in a den among traitors, his chagrin and resentment partook of a feverish violence, and sleep for that night became a stranger to his eyes.

Here for the present we shall leave him, and direct our attention to the inhabitants of the castle, some of whom, by this time, had become as much agitated on his account, as he was himself chagrined and irritated. The perturbation of O'Halloran's mind, now that a deed was done which he could not quite justify, and to which he was accessory, was such as no good man could wish even his worst enemy to experience.

But there was another inmate of the castle, whom the events of this evening agitated still more severely than they did O'Halloran. This was she, who, in the estimation of Edward, was the fairest of all Erin's daughters, and whose tears of sorrow shed for him this evening, had he known of them, would have rendered him proud and happy in his misfortunes.

Ellen was sitting alone at a window in one of the small turrets on the southern side of the castle. From the window where she was stationed, she could survey the path by which Edward was to return; and if she at all took notice of the gathering shades, perhaps it was because they marked the lateness of the hour without bringing back the object of her solicitude. While she mused, the moments followed each other slowly, thought anxiously succeeded thought, but still there was no appearance of him for whom she sighed. Several people came at different times up the avenue, but Edward did not come.

"I will go down," thought she, "to the gate. When I perceive his approach, I can easily run back and regain the castle without his seeing me."

She went to the gate. She ventured into the avenue. She saw a tall figure hastily advancing. She retreated within the gate, when, looking back, she perceived it to be the figure of a woman. She returned to the avenue, and met Peg Dornan. Peg was in great agitation when she approached.

"Some yin maun help him," she abruptly exclaimed; "an' your ain bonny sel' maun haste an' fin' oot that yin, or it may soon be owre wi' him;—an' he liked you weel, an' would hae run to help you in sic need, at the blackest hour o' midnicht."

"What is the matter?" anxiously demanded Ellen. "For whom do you want help?"

"For the bonniest lad that e'er cam' to thir parts—for Mr Middleton, wham I like as weel as e'er I liked Jock Dornan, my ain sin."

"For God's sake! dear Peg, what has befallen Mr Middleton?"

"He has fallen amang his enemies."

"What! have they killed him?" exclaimed Ellen, fearfully.

"No, my bonny bairn, I hope they hae na yet gane that far; but they're no to be trusted owre lang."

"For Heaven's sake! tell me what you know of the matter."

"That's what I cam' for, my bonny bairn, an' ye'll hear me. I was saunterin' at my leisure aboot an hour syne, on the road to Saunders's Glen, when I saw four o' the hettist o' the warm crappies, sittin' on the road-side, an' thinkin' they would be talkin' politics, I did na want to disturb them; so I turned through a slap to the other side o' the hedge; an' I would na hae stapped, but gane right on; but when I cam' fore-

nent them, though they didna see me, I heard yin of them say something aboot Mr Middleton; so I just hunkered doon to hear what it was. 'I'll warrant you he's an Orangeman,' said Sam Service. 'We must seize him, but not hurt him, let him be what he will,' said Jock M'Cauley. 'Our order is to confine him in the Point Cave, where we will soon find out whether he be friendly or not.' I thought it was nae time to listen langer, but to run and warn him to keep oot o' their way, as I did yince before. I e'en ran to Billy Caldwell's, whaur I had seen him in the afternoon, but they said he had gaen wi' auld Saunders to his glen. I let nae on, but ran there as fast as I could, for, thinks I, they'll get him in the hame-comin,' giff I dinna see him first. I ran like thoucht, for the deil tak' me gin I'm lazy on sic an erran'. The auld man was in the glen. I asked for Mr Middleton. 'He left me half an hour ago,' said he. 'Gude preserve us!' said I, 'then he's fa'en in wi' them. Auld man, you can do nae guid. I canna wait to talk wi' you. I maun rin to the castle, for, as sure as you're auld Saunders, the crappies hae catched Mr Middleton for nae guid.' When I said sae, he sprang—I never thoucht the auld body was sae soople. He would hae been here lang before me, had he skipt on at that gate; but he turned an' bade me haste an' tell a' to either Mr O'Halloran or Ellen, thinkin', doubtless, that he would do mair harm than guid by being owre hasty."

"And are you sure they have seized on Mr Middleton?" inquired Ellen.

"They maun ha' him," replied Peg, "for when I cam' back to whar they were sittin', they were gane. I thought he micht hae escaped them, an' won to the castle; but I met Ned Watt, the butler, just before I saw you, who says he's no come there; so I fear a's no richt."

"It is too plain!" said Ellen, almost inaudibly, for speech and sense now failed her, and she sank on the ground.

With a voice like thunder, Peg shouted for help, and in a few seconds, several of the domestics from the castle were on the spot.

Ellen soon recovered, and being conveyed to her apartment, she requested Mrs Brown to remain with her for a short time. When the others had gone, she told her aunt all that she had heard from Peg Dornan; at the same time confessing her love to Edward. Her aunt then promised to communicate with her brother on the subject, and consult him as to what should be done on Edward's behalf. In the meantime, none of the castle servants knew of his captivity. O'Halloran himself not being present, Peg Dornan would relate her story to no one else, especially as she was persuaded that Ellen would lose no time in making her grandfather acquainted with Edward's situation. She indeed resolved not to mention the affair again, unless to those she could trust, and who might possess sufficient influence to serve him.

The next morning (for O'Halloran did not appear that night), Mrs Brown hastened to inform him of what she had heard respecting Edward's seizure by the United Irishmen. Her brother not only acknowledged that he knew of the fact, but had consented to it, and acquainted her at large with his reason for so doing. He assured her, however, that the captive would be treated with kindness, and that his life was in no danger.

Mrs Brown, with more warmth than was usual to her, expressed her surprise and indignation at what had taken place.

"What!" said she, "has my brother—he of whose honourable and noble course of conduct I have hitherto been so proud—become at last so forgetful of his long-boasted rectitude, as to betray an unsuspecting youth, who was a stranger and his guest, into the power of those who hate him, and whose hatred to those who may be in their power is almost equivalent to destruction?"

"Sister," said O'Halloran, rising hastily, "I have told you my reasons for my conduct. If they are insufficient to justify me in your eyes, it is of little consequence, since they do it in my own."

He then left the apartment; and Mrs Brown, with a heavy heart, returned to sympathise with her niece.

"Your grandfather has assured me," said she, endeavouring to comfort her, "that no attempt will be made upon his life, and that he shall experience no inconvenience in their power to prevent, except the loss of liberty."

Ellen's uncertainty respecting her lover's fate being thus removed, the violence of her emotions gradually subsided, and was in a short time succeeded by a calm and settled melancholy.

The liveliness and ingenuity of Miss Agnew, who soon discovered the cause of her friend's distress, greatly aided the unceasing tenderness and solicitude of Mrs Brown, in assuaging the poignancy of Ellen's grief, and she was in a few weeks restored to a tolerable enjoyment of existence.

Edward sustained his misfortunes with great spirit, and however severely he felt his being thus enclosed, as it were, in a living tomb, he took care that none around him should perceive the state of his feelings.

The Rev. Mr Porter, a Presbyterian clergyman, at this time under cover from a threatened prosecution for high treason, was his most agreeable and constant companion. Mr Samuel Nelson, one of the proprietors of the *Northern Star*, and a man of great intelligence, was at this period a very active agent of the United Directory, and, therefore, a frequent visitor at the cavern; but not being under proscription by the government, he frequented it rather for the purpose of business than concealment. His arrival always excited great interest; for he never failed to bring with him a large assortment of news, and a budget of political documents for the inspection of his coadjutors.

The Frenchman, whom we have also already mentioned, was a bustling, active sort of a character, who, on all occasions, assumed an air of great importance, as being a citizen and a public, or (to speak more correctly) a secret functionary of "the great nation."

For the first two days of Edward's imprisonment, O'Halloran did not visit the cave. On the evening of the third, he entered with a bundle of letters and newspapers, which he handed to Nelson. Then, going forward to Edward—

"Mr Middleton," said he, "I am truly sorry that it is against your will you are here; and I hope that it will be soon otherwise. I request you will read this letter at your leisure, and seriously consider its contents."

He then seated himself at the table, and for about an hour joined his confederates in perusing the papers he had brought; after which he asked Nelson to accompany him to the castle, and they retired together.

Immediately on receiving the letter, Edward withdrew to his sleeping closet, where, throwing himself on his couch, he read an eager defence of

O'Halloran's conduct, and an urgent appeal to himself to join the United Irishmen.

To this letter Edward wrote a very copious reply, in which, after assuring O'Halloran that he gave full credit to the motives which influenced him in consenting to his captivity, and, on that account, let its issue be what it might, he freely forgave him; he proceeded to reason with him in regard to the hopelessness of the efforts of the conspirators, and to justify his holding aloof altogether from their schemes; concluding with the following reference to his own imprisonment:—

"To obtain my enlargement, I will come under no obligations that might by any possibility be ascribed to meanness or timidity.

"I should scorn to act the part of an informer, against either the misguided, or the unfortunate, and, with respect to you individually, to whom I am, under Providence, indebted for life itself, gratitude binds me too strongly to your personal welfare, to permit me either inadvertently or intentionally, to divulge any part of your conduct, or of those connected with you, that might operate to your disadvantage."

O'Halloran and his confederates finding that they could not shake Edward's political principles, desisted after this, from making the attempt. They also appeared more guarded when conversing in his presence, so that, during the remainder of the summer, he obtained very little information concerning the progress of their affairs.

In the meantime, the Recluse, being aware of the capricious and revengeful disposition of several of those who had access to his imprisoned friend, became every day more uneasy concerning him. With M'Nelvin, who also felt much on the subject, and who was his only confidant, he had frequent conferences on the practicability of procuring Edward's liberty, but they could devise no plan that seemed in the slightest degree to promise success.

Ellen, by the assurances she received of his personal safety, and by the sympathy and kind attentions of her aunt and Miss Agnew, became daily more resigned and cheerful, so that before the end of August, she was seen taking her usual evening walks, although it was observed that she generally walked alone, and as much as possible courted solitude. One evening, about this time, an incident took place which, as it had some connection with those events which led to Edward's enlargement, should be related.

Monsieur Monier, the French emissary already mentioned, had fallen desperately in love with her; and having obtained her grandfather's permission to address her, had added greatly to her affliction by persecuting her with his passion for several months past.

On the evening alluded to, he followed Ellen in one of her favourite and lonely walks, into a small wood that skirted the Volunteer ground. She was indulging her melancholy feelings in reading Burns's beautiful song of Highland Mary when Monier approached. He had just left the company of the gentlemen at the castle, among whom the social glass had circulated freely, and was a little heated with the liquor he had drunk.

"I am right happy, right glad, mam'selle," said he, "to meet with you here. This is a fine, lovely-looking place for a lover like me to meet her he loves better than all the world."

"Sir," said Ellen, "I have often told you not to speak to me on such

a subject. I now wish to be alone. You will therefore be pleased to walk on to wherever you were going, and leave me to myself."

"Beautiful creature, do you think I can leave you? I left my company and my wine to come after you."

"You did very wrong, sir; and I insist that you shall immediately return to your company and your wine, for whatever business you may have with them, I assure you, with me you can have none."

"Ah! my dear, with your bright eyes, with your lovely cheeks like the rose, and with your pretty bosom like the snow, I must have business. I am tired of politics, I now want to enjoy love."

"What do you mean, sir," said she, "by thus obtruding yourself upon me, when I tell you that your company is unwelcome?"

"Is my company unwelcome? Ah! I know somebody else, whose company you would prefer in this place."

"No matter what you know; only begone from me."

"Ah! my love, you should think how that man is in my power. He is my rival. I can be revenged. Only let me sit with you, and talk with you, and kiss your pretty hand, and he shall be used well."

"I say again, sir, begone! How dare you use such freedoms?"

"It is only the way in France, mam'selle. I love you to my very soul, and I must kiss you and court you as lovers always do there."

So saying he caught her very roughly.

"O God of mercy! is there no one to help me?" exclaimed the terrified maiden.

"Villain!" cried a loud, tremendous voice, "receive that for your infamous conduct to an angel," and a tall stout man, without a hat or coat, and bald-headed, struck him on the face with such force that he fell to the ground screaming, while the blood gushed freely from his mouth and nostrils. Ellen could not recognise the stranger.

"Whoever you are," said she, "may Heaven bless you for the deed!"

"Take my arm, fair innocence! I will protect you home."

She did so, and without speaking he conducted her to the public road which led to the castle.

"You are now safe," said he, "I must leave you.

"But first," she replied, "let me know to whom I am indebted for this deliverance."

"There are people approaching," he replied: "I must not be seen. Describe me to no one. Call on the Recluse to-morrow, at five in the afternoon. He will tell you who I am. But stay, I see M'Nelvin, who knows me. He will conduct you to the castle."

The poet, on seeing Ellen, was about to retire, but the stranger called him forward.

"Protect this young lady to the castle," said he, "ask her no questions; but return to me in an hour. I shall explain all."

So saying, he disappeared, and M'Nelvin with considerable embarrassment, offered Ellen his arm.

When they reached the castle; the poet declined entering; but before they parted Ellen requested him to call the next day to accompany her to the Recluse's cavern, and he consented.

After much reflection on the Frenchman's misconduct, Ellen resolved not to reveal it to her friends. She recollected his threats against Edward, and she conceived that, by publishing his disgrace, she would only

irritate him the more, and perhaps stimulate him to push his revenge even to assassination.

At the appointed time, she accompanied M'Nelvin to the hermit's cave, at the door of which he left her, promising to return in an hour to conduct her back. She found the old man in his usual attire in his first apartment. He informed her that he was the person who had rescued her yesterday—that seeing the Frenchman following her in a state of intoxication, and knowing how she had been lately persecuted by him, he thought it prudent to remain convenient for her protection; but not wishing to be known to him as the Recluse, he threw off part of the disguise he had usually worn since he came into this neighbourhood.

"Then you are not the decrepit, destitute old man we have hitherto taken you to be?"

"No," he replied, "but I have strong reasons for wishing to appear so for some time. In the meantime, my daughter, when you want a friend, when you need a protector, fly here, repose confidence in me, and be assured you shall receive ready and sufficient succour. Return home now, my daughter. May God bless you: and be you still as innocent and virtuous as you now are, and you will deserve His blessing."

"Thank you, father," said she, "for you have spoken comfort to my soul. How shall I ever be able to repay such kindness?"

"By nursing me on my death-bed," he replied, "and shedding the tears of affection over my grave. Farewell! Visit me often."

At the door of the cave she met the poet, who had been waiting there to conduct her home. Being thus assured of the disinterested attachment of two worthy persons, she became more cheerful in her mind, although her terror of the Frenchman was so great, that she resolved to discontinue those solitary rambles, from which she had drawn so much enjoyment, lest he should again find an opportunity to assault her.

In the meantime, Tom Mullins and his companion, on the day they left the cave, rode as far as the town of Antrim, without meeting with any adventures worthy relating. Here they consulted their instructions, and found that they were to remain there for two days in expectation of Edward overtaking them, at the expiration of which time, if he did not arrive, they were to proceed to the seat of Sir Philip Martin, in the county of Tyrone, who was a relation and a confident of the Recluse, and whose son, having been Edward's fellow-student at Trinity College, he had resolved to visit on his return homeward. They had also a letter from Edward to the Earl O'Neil, whose castle lay on the way from Antrim to Sir Philip Martin's residence.

On the evening of their second night at Antrim, as they were sitting comfortably over a mug of ale, two soldiers belonging to a regiment of fencibles that then lay in the town, and a townsman, came into the room. The soldiers, rudely provoking a quarrel, ended by dragging the two to the guard-house, where, in less than an hour, they were convicted by a court-martial of being United Irishmen, and attempting to abuse two privates belonging to his majesty's regiment of Fifeshire Fencibles, and were each sentenced to receive five hundred lashes next morning.

Through the interference of the townsman, who had witnessed the whole affair, however, the letter to the Earl O'Neil was conveyed to that nobleman, and he obtained their release, and the punishment of the soldiers.

Under the auspices of the earl, they arrived without further accident at the place of their destination, where Hunter left his charge, and returned home in safety, about three weeks after his departure, to the great joy of all his kindred and acquaintances, but especially to that of the sweet Peggy Caldwell, whom he vowed never to leave so long again until they became *man an' wife.*

Sir Philip Martin, to whom the Recluse had subsequently written concerning Edward's detention, being a favourer of the United Irishmen, and having, by inquiries from O'Halloran, satisfied himself that his life was in no danger, refrained from acquainting his friends with the circumstance. Lord O'Neil was ignorant of it; consequently, to Edward's relations, who had become uneasy at his long and silent absence, and had begun to make some inquiry after him, he could give no other information, than that he had received a letter from him in the month of May last, at which period he was in the vicinity of Larne. Edward had written to his friends shortly after coming to the North, that he intended, before he returned home, to visit the island of Staffa, and some other places in the Highlands. It was, therefore, concluded that he was exploring some of the remote parts of that wild, but, to a mind like Edward's, attractive portion of the empire, from whence transmitting communications by letter they knew to be rather difficult and uncertain. They therefore thought proper for a time to cease their inquiries after him.

CHAPTER V.

It was in the autumn of 1797, and sometime after the preceding transactions, that the melancholy event took place, which severed the last remaining link of the chain which had hitherto bound thousands of the Presbyterian community in the North, to the side of the government, and gave that impulse to the wheels of the conspiracy, which no subsequent measure of either policy or force could arrest, until it terminated in the fury and vengeance of a sanguinary rebellion. This event was the death, or, as the popular voice termed it, the martyrdom of William Orr.

It will be readily supposed that the United Chiefs who frequented the cave in which Edward Barrymore was confined partook largely of the public excitement on this occasion. As their designs, however, were far from being ripe for execution, they had the prudence to suppress their feelings, and to act with moderation; and were, also, at considerable pains to restrain the popular fury from breaking out prematurely into acts of violence. In consequence of this solicitude to prevent atrocities that would have been detrimental to their cause, they preserved the jury that had convicted Orr, from becoming victims to the fury of some of the more daring and fanatical of their party, who had denounced vengeance against them.

One evening, as Porter and Nelson were discoursing on this subject in Edward's presence, in such a manner as almost compelled him to express his opinion, he remarked that it was neither his province nor his inclination to defend the executive authority on all occasions. "It is not necessary," said he, "that an adherent of our admirable form of govern-

ment should defend the general management of any particular administration, much less approve of any isolated act of harshness or cruelty. Still, however, before I can agree to consign the present ministers altogether to infamy, I must know the motives which induced them to permit this unhappy execution. False representations of the case may have been made to them. They may have been persuaded that Orr was actually guilty of seducing the soldier from his allegiance, and therefore wished by a severe example to deter others from such practices. But, gentlemen, be my opinions on this subject what they may, I cannot help expressing my sorrow for the calamities which I perceive accumulating on the country, and which, it is my sincere conviction, have had their origin in the unjustifiable and illegal attempts of secret associations to overawe the established authorities into measures, the beneficial tendency of which is, to say the least of it, controvertible."

"Sir," said Nelson, "though we dislike your sentiments, we cannot but admire the candour with which you express them; nor can we be offended at your freedom of speech, since an avowed antagonist is a much safer companion than a treacherous colleague."

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of O'Halloran, with a bundle of letters, one of which he handed to Nelson, saying, "Here is bad news for you. They have done what I long since predicted they would sometime do."

When Nelson had finished reading the letter O'Halloran had given him, he exclaimed, "Yes, our Star is, indeed, set; but I trust that the light it has diffused through the country, will not be so easily extinguished, and since we cannot write for the public good, nothing remains but to fight for it."

"What new atrocity has taken place? If I may be permitted to ask," said the Reverend Mr Porter, who was at that moment preparing a communication for "the Northern Star," in continuation of several ingenious letters, entitled, "Billy Bluff and Squire Firebrand," with which he had lately amused and very much excited the minds of the people of Ulster.

"You may throw your manuscript aside," replied Nelson, "till better times. Barber's infamous dragoons have broken into my house, and destroyed our press. There is a letter from Teeling, who witnessed the transaction. You may read it aloud. There will be no harm in Mr Middleton hearing of another piece of tyranny—a ferocious outrage upon the liberty of the press, committed by a government which some men would make us believe is the grand protector of that liberty."

"Gentlemen," observed Edward, "I have said before, that an attachment to our form of government does not involve a necessity to defend every act of its administration. But since you have drawn my attention to it, I shall listen to the statement you have received, provided I shall not be urged to give an opinion on it, should I wish to be silent."

He was informed that after hearing the particulars, he might remain silent or not, as he thought proper. The clergyman then read the letter aloud; but as the details do not affect our story, we need not weary our readers with them.

When the letter had been read, "Concerning this outrage," said Edward, "I will give my opinion frankly and unsolicited. It is an instance of military violence which no rational, honest man can justify;

and which it is the duty of the government severely and promptly to punish."

"I know the present government too well," replied Nelson, "to expect justice from it. If we want justice we must take it. Of our power to do so, our oppressors will soon be convinced. I have already sacrificed my property; and my life, which is all I can now give, is ready to be yielded, whenever my country's benefit requires it."

"I am impatient for the day of action, that we may rid this long-suffering land of the tyrants," said O'Halloran. "Every day produces fresh atrocities, and adds to our sufferings and their insolence. Delay may increase their strength. It can scarcely add to ours, for we are already in numbers sufficiently strong. Why should we tamely continue to suffer? Why not hasten the day of our deliverance? The people are now animated and zealous. Orr has not died in vain."

"Mr O'Halloran," replied Porter, "prudence requires that we should exercise patience a few months longer. Our adherents, however zealous and numerous, are not properly organised for insurrection, and the foreign aid we are promised is not expected before spring, our wiser policy is to recommend our friends to a temporary submission to their misfortunes, rather than risk the ruin of their cause by a premature effort."

"Your reasoning may be correct," said O'Halloran, "but it is hard to remain inactive, and see an unoffending populace becoming every day more and more the victims of a wanton and cruel tyranny."

"We may be active," observed Nelson, "but we must be cautious. The day of retribution will come, and when we strike the blow, if it should be slow I should like it to be sure."

"I know you are right," said O'Halloran. "My feelings, not my judgment, would hurry me into premature action. But it must not be."

During this conversation, Edward's mind, as will readily be supposed, was but ill at ease. He felt no inclination to engage in it, and when O'Halloran and Nelson withdrew, he retired to his closet, there to ruminate with a heavy heart, on the rashness and misfortunes of these infatuated men, and to deplore the folly of that misgovernment which had driven them to the adoption of their desperate schemes.

CHAPTER VI.

The rancour and hatred which Monsieur Monier bore towards Edward broke out in several instances of spleen and ill-nature, and tended not a little to make his imprisonment become daily more and more irksome. He publicly insisted that such an enemy to the rights of man, and the liberties of his country, should not be permitted to live.

"If he were in France," said he, "our *sans culottes* would soon have him to the guillotine; for there we know how to get rid of the enemies of the people."

O'Halloran, and the other leaders, however, resisted all his importunities, and he could procure none of the lower orders to assassinate his rival, as their chiefs were so averse to it. He, at length, fell upon another scheme of getting him out of the way. A brig, freighted and

cleared out of Belfast as if bounded for London, but in reality intended for some French port, with dispatches from the United Irish Directory, to the Republican Government, lay in the adjoining harbour.

The Frenchman thought to have Edward carried on board of her, and despatched as a prisoner to France, where he could more easily control his fate. But even this he could not effect without the consent of the leaders. He, therefore, applied to Porter, who most usually resided in the cave. That gentleman, conceiving that the principal intention of Edward's imprisonment would be answered by this means, and his life at the same time secured from any sudden impulse of resentment among his enemies, consented, and, at last, prevailed on O'Halloran also to consent.

The Frenchman having thus far succeeded, immediately had the night fixed and the men selected for carrying him on board. It happened, however, that M'Nelvin, the poet, became accidentally acquainted with this plot. It was on an afternoon, towards the end of October, that he had thrown himself down in a thicket, a few paces from his arbour on the hill, with a small volume of Shakspere's plays in his hand. His mind was absorbed in the romantic adventures of the Midsummer's Night's Dream, when he was startled by the sounds of voices approaching him. On looking from his resting-place he perceived the Frenchman, and Darragh, the man who had attempted Tom Mullins' life, advancing slowly. He lay quiet. When only a few yards from him, they stopped; but he was closely concealed from their view.

"They have consented at last," said the Frenchman, "to let that fair-faced Orangeman be sent to France; but I wish to Jupiter, that he could be put out of the way before he arrives there; for I understand that our directors are now become so puny-hearted that they, too, make a fuss about a man's life, although he should be denounced in the name of the people. I am, when I think of it, somewhat afraid to trust him alive there. He might get exchanged, come home and then disclose all. We must be more cautious than to let him off alive, say what they will about it. I have a purse of twenty guineas and a captain's commission, to bestow on the brave man who will kill this traitorous heretic and lover of crowned heads."

"Jack Lafferty and I," replied Darragh, "will do it. But not for your money. We'll do it for the good of the cause. When is he to be shipped?"

"There are six men appointed to convey him on board to-morrow night," answered the Frenchman.

"To-morrow all the country will gather to dig Robbin M'Brim's potatoes," said Darragh. "Robbin has been in jail these three months. He is a true fellow. We have shorn his corn already, and will dig his potatoes in rank and file to-morrow, in spite of either orangemen or government. I'll see Lafferty at the digging, and I will take care to get the king's man snug from telling before the brig sails. Who guards the cave to-morrow?"

The Frenchman answered, that a man, called Anthony Allen, was selected to guard the cave during their absence.

This discovery concerned the peace of Ellen Hamilton too much to be neglected by M'Nelvin. To save Edward, therefore, from impending danger became now the great object of his solicitude. At first he knew

not how to act; but, as he had, for several years past, been accustomed in all his perplexities to seek advice from the Recluse, he now sought him It was soon agreed that they should, at once, make the affair known to her whom it most nearly concerned. Accordingly M'Nelvin hastened to the castle, from whence he brought Ellen, without loss of time, to the glen. The Recluse, with as much caution and tenderness as possible, disclosed to her Edward's danger. For some minutes, she remained the picture of surprise and horror, but said nothing; and so much did her emotion seem to have overcome her, that her friends began to repent having made the disclosure.

At length tears came to her relief; and she found utterance.

"I feared that it would come to this at last!" she exclaimed. "O, my friends, what can be done for him? He must not, surely he must not die!"

"Can we with any prospect of success inform your grandfather of what is meditated against him?" inquired the Recluse.

"I fear not," she replied, "he is so much devoted to the will, and what he conceives to be the interest of these conspirators, that to save his own life, he would scarcely risk a contention with them."

Then, in passionate words, she burst out, "My friends, I am resolved. I shall penetrate into their inmost recesses. I shall find him. If they have even hearts of stone, I shall melt them, or if they be too obdurate, my hands shall give him weapons; we shall clear the way, or we shall die together."

Her frenzy startled and confounded her auditors; but it suggested an idea to M'Nelvin, which he immediately communicated; and which by infusing hope into Ellen's mind, greatly calmed her agitation.

"To-morrow," said he, "the cave will be deserted by its usual inmates who are to attend the potato-digging; and Anthony Allen is appointed to remain sentinel over Mr Middleton. He will not refuse Miss O'Halloran admittance. She may then inform the prisoner of his danger, and if we can contrive to draw off Allen's attention, for some time, from the door of the cave, he may escape disguised in apparel similar to her own, which she can provide for the occasion."

"I shall try it," said Ellen.

After some further deliberation, the Recluse approved of the project, as the only plausible means of rescuing his friend from the destruction that threatened him. How to manage Allen, so as to prevent him from recognising the prisoner, when he should pass from the cave, was now the difficulty. Neither the Recluse nor M'Nelvin were much trusted by the United Irishmen. They had both refused to take the oath of fidelity to their party; but as neither of them could give much efficient aid in a military view, the one being decrepit from age, and the other from accident, they were not much pressed on the subject. Still, as they did not belong to the body, they were not trusted by it.

In this dilemma, they directed their views to Jemmy Hunter, who had served Edward so efficiently on a former occasion. Ellen now returned home to prepare the dress which was to be Edward's disguise. M'Nelvin left her at the castle gate, and went in search of Hunter. This young man had been for some weeks a bridegroom, and as merry as a lark in a May morning; for his Peggy, who had long charmed him with her smiles and her blushes, had, at length, blessed him with her hand

and her heart, and a happier couple could not have been found in the whole province.

M'Nelvin found the young bridegroom working in a garden adjoining his dwelling-house, with a heart in a humour to be pleased with everything; and informed him that the Recluse had business with him, which could only be communicated in the cavern.

"Come in awee, an' tak' a dram," said Jemmy, "an' I'll gang wi' you directly;" but as the poet was in haste, he begged Jemmy to go with him without delay, his business being important. He promised, however, that some evening soon he would make amends for the shortness of his present visit.

At Saunders's cave, Hunter was made acquainted with the whole affair, and was asked if he thought he could occupy Allen's attention in such a manner, that when the prisoner passed out, he might be prevented from so closely observing him as to endanger detection. He readily undertook to do so.

"And, by heavens, if he does detect him," said he, "I'll pinion him wi' sich a grip, that he'll no' e'en stir till Mr Middleton be clear oot o' his reach; for we maun save the lad. He was a guid frien' to Peggy, and she aye thinks weel o' him, an' I'll no' forget him in his pinch."

The morning rose that ushered in the potato-digging day, in which numerous throngs of lads and lasses, dressed in their best attire, with light and merry hearts, came from all parts of the adjacent country, into the town of Larne; the lads to march to the work of charity and benevolence, the lasses to witness the procession, and reward their lovers as they passed them with their smiles.

It was in the afternoon of that day, when all the conspirators, except the sentinel, had left the cave, that, with an agitated and fearful heart, as if she were approaching some crisis of her fate, Ellen, in company with Hunter, hastened to the prison of her lover, with a resolution to effect his deliverance, or die with him. Often, however, the feelings of the woman would obtrude upon her, and for a moment damp the determination of the lover. But the recollection of Edward's danger still prevailed, and enabled her to persist.

Without hesitation she and her attendant were admitted by Allen. The granddaughter of O'Halloran could not be suspected, and Hunter had been long the particular friend of Allen. Besides, ever since his life had been in jeopardy at Antrim, the particulars of which story were widely circulated, he had become highly popular with his party. He remained on the outside to converse with Allen, whilst Ellen advanced. She had now, however, to experience the greatest struggle with her delicacy that she had yet encountered; but her resolution carried her forward, and she appeared in Edward's presence lovely and blushing, but disconcerted and speechless with the conflict of terror, shame, and solicitude which agitated her bosom. He was, at the first view, so struck with astonishment, that he could scarcely believe the vision to be real.

"What happiness!" he exclaimed. "Has an angel, in the dearest of all created forms, come to visit me in my prison?"

She sunk upon a chair, and almost fainted. He ran to support her, but she soon recovered her self-possession sufficiently to account for her

appearance, by relating the danger she had discovered him to be in, and the means she had provided for his escape. It is needless to repeat the expressions of gratitude and rapture in which Edward now indulged. She, however, soon reminded him that there was no time for conversation, and that, if he meant to escape, he must haste and depart. She now supplied him with an exact duplicate of the clothes she then wore, and in a few minutes he was disguised.

"Let me," said he, "before I part from my guardian angel, kneel with her one precious minute before the throne of Heaven, that I may implore blessings upon her head."

They both kneeled; and he fervently commended her to the protection of the Almighty. Then imprinting on her hand a fervent kiss, and bidding her adieu, he rushed toward the door. Allen mistaking him for Miss O'Halloran was for running to assist him in getting out; but Hunter, who by this time had enticed him to the bottom of the rock, desired him to remain where he was, as he knew the young lady disliked to be disturbed with such attentions. He added, that though he had conveyed her here, he knew that she wished to return home by herself, and as his friend Allen was alone to-day, he believed he should stay a few hours to keep him company; and at once began to banter him.

"Why, Allen, man," said he, "you should think o' getting married. I'm tauld that Jenny Davis is amaist wud aboot you, an' she's a nice lass; an' her father can gie her twa hunner pun' ony day."

Allen confessed that he had a *hankering* after Jenny; but feared that she liked Tam Mathewson better than him.

By this time, Edward had ascended the hill that overlooked his late prison; and in a few minutes more, he found himself safe in the Recluse's habitation. His disguise was soon thrown aside.

"All has succeeded; Heaven be praised!" exclaimed the old man. "M'Nelvin waits at the top of the glen with your horse. Haste, fly, leave this distracted place, for there is no safety here; and God be with you."

"I go. Farewell, Father! We shall yet meet again. Till then, under Heaven, I charge you with the care of the angel who has delivered me."

"Adieu, my son. No earthly consideration shall prevent me from attending to that charge. Yonder is your horse."

Edward sprung forward, and seized M'Nelvin by the hand.

"Farewell!" said he. "Be still Miss O'Halloran's friend; I shall ever be yours."

He spurred his steed, and in three hours more found himself at the hospitable gate of Shanes Castle.

CHAPTER VII.

ARRIVED at the princely mansion of the ancient family of O'Neil, Edward Barrymore received a very cordial welcome from its noble owner; but in haste to return home, that he might relieve the solicitude of his friends, he, the next morning, continued his journey to the residence of Sir Philip Martin, attended by one of Lord O'Neil's servants. He arrived

there on the following day, and was received with all that cordiality and friendship he expected from a worthy family, with the heir of which he had been long and intimately acquainted. Here he met with honest Tom Mullins, who was nearly broken-hearted with vexation on his master's account—for although he had no knowledge of what had really happened, he could not get rid of the vague suspicion, that the United Irishmen had done him harm. He had been detained at Sir Philip Martin's during the whole summer, at the suggestion of the Recluse, who feared that if he returned to Dublin, he might give such information to Edward's friends as would direct their attention to O'Halloran's neighbourhood, and, perhaps, bring that gentleman into trouble.

Charles Martin, Edward's fellow-student, and bosom-friend, had been absent with his sisters, two pretty and amiable girls, on a visit to the house of a neighbouring gentleman. They, however, returned early in the evening, and great was the joy of Edward and his friend on meeting. Sir Philip had not acquainted his son with Edward's imprisonment; for their political principles being somewhat different, he was unwilling to prejudice the cause of the United Irishmen, by informing him of anything that would lessen them in his son's esteem. Hence, during a solitary walk, which the young friends took through Sir Philip's shrubberies, in order to relate to each other their adventures since they last parted, Charles was astonished and grieved at the extraordinary and perilous nature of those which had befallen Edward.

"I fear," said he, "that the machinations of these men against you are not over. What a pity that their connexions are so extended that we cannot bring them to justice, without involving those we love in their punishment. I agree with you, that all the circumstances considered, it is better to be silent on the subject. If you insist on immediately departing for Dublin, as your friends are so anxious concerning you, I cannot object, although I hoped to enjoy your company for several weeks here. But we shall not part so soon. I will accompany you, if you will wait but a couple of days that I may make arrangements for the journey." This being agreed to, Edward, having one day's rest on his hands, wrote to the Recluse an account of his safety and welfare, and requesting speedy intelligence concerning Ellen and the conduct of the United Irishmen on discovering his escape.

At length the two friends, well-armed and well-attended, set out for the capital, where they arrived on the third day, without encountering any accident.

Edward was now once more amongst his relatives, and the friends of his youth, an inhabitant of the metropolis of his country. But his heart and his affections were in a remote province. He wrote a second time to the Recluse, conjuring him to lose no time in acquainting him with the treatment that Ellen had received from her grandfather and his confederates, after his departure. It was, however, only the next day after forwarding this letter, that his mind was set at ease on this subject, by receiving one from the old man in reply to that which he had written at Sir Philip Martin's. He was informed that the United men kept the circumstance of his escape very quiet—that the whole blame was thrown on Jemmy Hunter, who was very willing to bear it. The old man added, that he even believed that O'Halloran was secretly rejoiced at it. "He, indeed," said he, "pretty sternly and closely inter-

rogated Ellen as to her motives for assisting in the affair; and when she candidly told him of the plot that had been laid for your destruction, he affected not to credit it. But, he said, that it was on the whole, perhaps, as well that you were out of their power, and that he had never approved of the scheme of sending you to France. He also mentioned, that if he could persuade his co-adjutors that they had no reason to dread your informing against them, he should entirely approve of what she had done. She took this opportunity to acquaint him with the whole of the Frenchman's villany towards herself. (Here the Recluse related the incidents of Monier's attack upon her, of which Edward was ignorant, but of which the reader has been already informed). This at length roused his indignation against the foreigner; and he that evening communicated the whole to Porter, Nelson, and another of the leaders named M'Cracken. They all joined in reprobating such conduct, and agreed to induce Monier to leave the country, by persuading him that the government had become apprised of his residence and employment, and that his safety depended on his returning to France, in the vessel which was about to sail with their despatches for his government; and the country has, in consequence, got rid of a mischievous visitor."

Edward, in order to allay the fears of the United party respecting the knowledge he had obtained of their measures, wrote a long letter to O'Halloran, in which he disclaimed any feelings of resentment on account of his confinement. He concluded this letter by informing his friend, that as his motives for concealing his real name and character no longer existed, he would now confess that he was the apparent representative of a family, sufficiently high in office and influence, to procure for any of his party who wished to return to their duty, forgiveness of the past, provided they would give security for the future. He would, therefore, assume his real name, which he had been induced for a time to conceal, from a desire to enjoy the esteem of some who had suddenly become extremely dear to him, but whose suspicion and dislike, he believed, a knowledge of that name would have excited. "I the more readily," said he, "give you my own name on this occasion, as I flatter myself that it will confirm your reliance on my promise of secrecy respecting your affairs, by showing you that on the fulfilment of that promise, I stake the honour of a house that has never yet acted dishonourably—the house of Barrymore."

Leaving Edward Barrymore, after his perilous journey to the North, in safety among his friends, we may turn our attention to what, in the meantime, befell the beauteous and tender mistress of his affections.

The sentinel at the cave, deceived by the disguise of Edward, and misled by the artifices of Jemmy Hunter, did not, for several hours, discover that his prisoner had escaped. The first intimation he had of it was by Hunter roundly saying—

"I think Miss O'Halloran will noo be tired waitin'; I maun see her hame."

"Why, she's gane lang sine," said the sentinel.

"May be sae an' may be no." I'll see wha's within, however," replied Hunter.

Accordingly, in he and the sentinel went, when, to the astonishment and confusion of the latter, Miss O'Halloran appeared in her own identical person.

"An' wha went oot in your likeness?" inquired the wondering sen-

tinel at the trembling girl. She made no reply, but held down her head to conceal her shame; for she had really become innocently ashamed, while the big tears stood ready to burst from her eyes.

"Never mind," said Hunter, intercedingly, "the fault was a' mine. Ye ken, Allen, I wad na let you rin after the gentleman, when he gat oot, or ye might hae broucht him back to his prison."

"The gentleman!" exclaimed Allen. "I hope the gentleman's no fled. Our officers will think I hae betrayed them. Some o' them may be for takin' my life. Ye ken some that wadna stop at that, if they thought I did it willingly. I should hae done my duty better."

"Fear naething," said his companion. "Jemmy Hunter will stan' by you, through thick an' thin, an' tak a' the blame, as he deserves to do, on him. In the meantime, his honour's daughter here, ye ken, canna be in the fault. I maun just see her hame; an' I'll be back in a crack to stan' between you an' danger."

"Mr Allen," said Ellen, who had considerably recovered from her confusion, "I shall stay here, and confess the share I have had in your prisoner's escape, rather than that you should be subjected to any trouble on its account."

"No, my lady," said the gallant Allen, "you can tell the truth as weel in the castle as here. Since he is gane, it canna be helpit noo. It's useless to fret; an' Jemmy here is willing to bear the blame o't; an' I dinna mislippen Jemmy makin' his word guid at a' risks. So I dinna like, my lady, to see you sae vexed aboot it. When you gang hame, your aunt Brown will gie you mair comfort than I can. Jemmy, you can gae wi' her; but see that you be back in time to clear me frae the blame."

Jemmy promised he would, and having conducted his fair charge to the castle, he returned with a light and satisfied heart to the cave. When O'Halloran, Porter, Nelson, M'Cracken, and their confederates returned in the evening from the potato-digging, they were, at first, much surprised and chagrined at what had taken place.

"If the fellow don't inform on us," said Nelson, after his first excitement had somewhat abated, "the matter will not indeed much grieve me; for I believe we could never have prevailed on him to join us."

"Though we should, perhaps, have less cause for alarm," said O'Halloran, "if he were still in our power, yet I am persuaded that he has too much honour to be an informer."

"I agree with you," said Porter; "and I own that I see no great cause for apprehension."

"I am glad, gentlemen," said M'Cracken, "that you console yourselves so easily; and since the misfortune cannot be remedied, I must acknowledge that philosophy to be the soundest, which enables us with the least difficulty to bear it."

CHAPTER VIII.

ALTHOUGH Ellen was treated with indulgence on the occasion just related, it was not long till she suffered persecution enough of another kind. A certain Sir Geoffrey Carebrow, a very formal bachelor of great property,

who had lately come, after several years' absence, to reside on an estate which he possessed in the neighbourhood, having met with her at a public ball which was given in Larne, during the Christmas holidays, became violently enamoured of her. He was a man, who, from his youth, was noted for a union of two passions seldom found united in the same person, a love of women and a love of money. Although he possessed estates which yielded him upwards of fifteen thousand a year, with nearly a hundred and fifty thousand pounds in the national funds, he had hitherto been deterred from wedlock on account of the expense of supporting a wife and rearing a family.

The exquisite beauty and bewitching sweetness of Ellen's countenance, together with the graceful symmetry of her form, struck on his impure fancy with a force altogether irresistible, and he immediately centred all his wishes and happiness in the enjoyment of such charms.

To effect this, he discovered to be no easy matter. A little reflection convinced him that illicit gratification was out of the question. There remained, therefore, no other means of possessing her than by breaking through his long formal resolution against matrimony, and making her the partner of his fortune.

This was a horrible alternative; but he felt that he could not be happy without her, and he resolved to adopt it. He accordingly took the earliest opportunity of making known to her his wishes. She at once gave him an unequivocal and decided denial. In vain did he make her the most splendid offers; in vain did he enlarge on his immense wealth, and on the violence and sincerity of his passion, which he asserted would never permit him to know happiness without her. She was inexorable.

He next had recourse to her grandfather; and soon gained his favour, by suddenly becoming a warm friend to the United cause. As he had been hitherto considered, not indeed a royalist, but a very lukewarm favourer of the popular party, O'Halloran looked on his accession as a matter of great importance. At this juncture it was in reality so. By order of the Dublin Directory a certain quantity of arms and ammunition was to be provided by the northern conspirators, before the middle of March ensuing. To raise money for this purpose was no easy matter. The greater number of the zealous leaders were men of broken fortunes; and the voluntary contributions of the lower orders came in so slowly and in such small sums, as to be of little or no service.

Great was the anxiety that our northern chiefs felt on this occasion; and frequent were the consultations they held on the subject. O'Halloran had already expended within the last fifteen months about thirty thousand pounds on account of the confederacy; a great portion of which had gone to relieve the distresses of those whom the government had harassed on account of their obnoxious principles. Upwards of sixty thousand pounds were wanted on the present occasion. To raise this sum was beyond his power, without mortgaging his estate, and perhaps paying an exorbitant interest. This, however, he resolved to do, rather than permit the cause to suffer. To Sir Geoffrey Carebrow he, therefore, applied, as at this crisis he was almost the only moneyed man connected with the party. A mortgage for sixty thousand pounds, was immediately executed, of which forty thousand pounds were paid down, at an interest, secretly agreed upon, of ten per cent.; the remaining sum being

promised in six weeks. The parties to this bargain also entered into a secret stipulation that both the principal and the interest of this mortgage should be at the control of Ellen Hamilton, when she should become the wife of Sir Geoffrey Carebrow. With the money thus procured, a vessel was despatched to Scotland, from whence she returned in a few weeks with the requisite supply of warlike stores for the conspirators. In the meantime Sir Geoffrey did not fail to use the advantage which he had thus obtained over O'Halloran, in prosecuting his suit for Ellen. His vehement professions of patriotism blinded O'Halloran to his other faults; and he looked with respect upon a man whom, had he known him better, he would have detested. But being himself the very reverse of a hypocrite, he was the less likely to suspect hypocrisy in others. Hence he firmly believed Carebrow's patriotism to be sincere. For the same reason he was convinced, that his attachment to Ellen was not only genuine, but ardent and disinterested; and being unquestionably a man of great wealth, he conceived that he consulted both her interest and happiness by ordering her to receive his addresses, and to look on him as her future husband. This was a source of great affliction to this dutiful and affectionate girl. She now felt herself for the first time obliged to disobey him who was her only parent, and whose directions she had hitherto considered as an unerring rule of conduct.

Things were in this state, when that great national day which warms and elevates every Irish heart, the day consecrated to Erin's tutelary saint, arrived, and was celebrated at O'Halloran Castle by a splendid entertainment.

On this occasion all the Northern leaders of the conspiracy who could conveniently attend were present. The room was fancifully decorated with national emblems and various transparencies, denoting, but not plainly expressing, the sentiments and views of the company.

After supper the natural buoyancy of Irish spirits found vent in a ball, which was graced by as many beautiful female countenances as the same number of the sex ever exhibited. It was opened by the accomplished and enthusiastic Robert Emmet, then on a tour through the North, and Ellen, who, decorated by her grandfather's desire in the most tasteful manner for the occasion, tripped the mazy round with a liveliness and grace which delighted every one who beheld her.

Sir Geoffrey, who was too unwieldy to dance, had his fondness for her so excited that he kept dangling about her and watching her motions in the most disagreeable and troublesome manner. Even the youth who was her partner, and whose heart was *at that time* engaged to another, could not escape his jealousy. He perceived it, and declined dancing as soon as decency permitted. When Ellen was seated, Sir Geoffrey placed himself by her side, and exceedingly annoyed her with his importunities; but she bore them with a patience which displayed her good nature to so much advantage, that it excited almost as much admiration as her personal charms.

When the dance terminated, a new species of patriotic entertainment was exhibited.

A splendid seat, resembling a throne, approachable by steps, was prepared for one of the ladies, chosen to personate the genius of Ireland, in whose presence each gentleman who joined in the amusement should stand and deliver some national sentiment. The per-

son who, in her opinion, should deliver the most striking, tasteful, and patriotic sentiment, she was to crown with a wreath of artificial shamrock, and pronounce him the victor in this species of intellectual contest.

Ellen was unanimously chosen to represent her Country's Genius. She ascended the throne with a wreath in one hand, and a small parchment tablet in the other. When seated, she assumed a peculiar dignity of manner, such as the imagination of Shakspere might have conceived the genius of nature's sweetest island to possess; and addressed the company in the following words:—

"I invite every Irishman who hears me, to come forward, and in the presence of his country's genius, express in one *sentence*, the patriotic feelings of his soul: and on the brows of him who shall excel all his competitors, in the force, fervour, and elegance of his sentiment, so expressed, I shall bind this wreath, the emblem of his country's faith, and the reward of his merit. But first, I require that every candidate for this reward shall inscribe his name on this tablet."

The following names were immediately inscribed; Samuel Nelson, Robert Emmet, Henry M'Cracken, Henry O'Halloran, Luke Teeling, James Porter, Geoffrey Carebrow and Thomas Russel.

After counting the names, "Eight Patriots," said she, "are enrolled as candidates for this prize. If there be any other present who wishes to contend for it, let him come forward, now, or never."

One of the musicians, who appeared to be unknown to the company, habited in the costume of ancient minstrelsy, with a long flowing green robe bound round his waist with a sash of the same colour, and having a hood of green velvet so constructed as to conceal his countenance from observation, now modestly advanced, and making a graceful bow to the fair genius, inscribed his name Patrick Fitzgerald.

Ellen then called over the names, and invited each to deliver his sentiment.

The minstrel Fitzgerald was the last to be called. He advanced modestly, but with dignity, and all-peculiarly as he was attired, the elegance of his figure struck the beholders, and many of the fair ladies wished in vain for a view of that countenance which he kept so carefully concealed.

"Lovely Genius of a beloved country!" said he, "O! may that God who alone can rescue her from misery, grant her a speedy and permanent deliverance, and render her children happy and worthy of happiness."

"Nothing more can be wished, nor better wished, for our dear but suffering country," said Ellen. "To thee, then, I award the wreath thou hast justly won, by the noble simplicity, the affecting piety, and the fervid patriotism of thy sentiment."

She then crowned him with the wreath as he knelt before her.

"Genius," said he, "still retaining his humble posture. This to me is a happy night; it shall long be a proud one. This sacred prize I shall ever preserve for thy sake, my beloved."

He hastily arose, leaving Ellen in extreme agitation, bowed to the wondering company, and disappeared before any of them could recover from their astonishment.

"Who is he? Does any one know him?" exclaimed several of the gentlemen.

"He is a noble, an elegant young man," thought all the ladies.

"He is an audacious intruder," cried Sir Geoffery; "an impertinent puppy! What arrogance and impudence to make love in this public manner to Miss O'Halloran! But I'll chastise the rascal."

With difficulty he was prevented from immediately rushing after the object of his rage in order to attempt putting his threats into execution.

Jealousy of the minstrel, however, boiled furiously within his breast, and although he had, with great effort, suppressed it so far as not to throw the company into confusion, he determined to spare no pains in making him feel his vengeance.

When the company had dispersed he demanded an interview with Ellen. To obtain this interview for him O'Halloran had to interfere with his authority, and she stipulated that it should be in his presence. Obtaining an assurance that Ellen knew nothing of the minstrel, Sir Geoffrey urged the violence of his passion, which he confessed occasioned him to be jealous of every thing she seemed to approve, while he himself was an object of her dislike.

"Lovely girl," said he, "only allay my apprehension of losing you, by promising to become my wife, and I shall be happy."

She replied not. Her grandfather urged her to speak.

"My dear Ellen," said he, "consult your own welfare and mine, by accepting a man who loves you so sincerely, and who has abundantly the power of promoting your felicity. You know not how soon the arm of oppression or the accidents of war may deprive you of my protection: and, oh! think how it would relieve the pangs of my last hour to reflect that you had a sure and just claim on that of a friend I so much value as Sir Geoffrey."

"Best and tenderest of parents," she replied, "do not attribute my refusal of a man I cannot love to any undutiful feeling towards you. Do not, do not, I conjure you, by the memory of the saint who gave me birth, do not compel me to do an act which would terminate all my happiness in this world."

"Ellen," said O'Halloran, "you are obstinate; but you do not know Sir Geoffrey sufficiently, or you would not scruple to become his wife. If any absurd or romantic feeling renders you perverse on this matter, depend on it I shall consult your interest better than to indulge that feeling. It is my duty to do so. Eight days you shall have to reflect on the subject, at the end of which time I shall expect your compliance with our wishes."

The cool, determined tone with which this was uttered overpowered her; for she saw that her grandfather's resolution to sacrifice her to the man she detested was unalterably fixed. She burst into tears, but remained silent.

"I shall urge you no more at present," said O'Halloran; rising to depart, "but remember my will and your own interest."

"Cruel girl," said Sir Geoffrey before he left the room, "why require such exercise of authority to compel you to be my wife, the wife of one who bears for you such unbounded love?"

He then seized her hand to kiss it on departing, but she hastily withdrew it.

"Leave me, sir," said she, "nor make me more wretched, and yourself more hated."

"Then adieu, my fair one. In another week this cruelty will be useless," he replied.

When they had retired she threw herself on her knees, and besought the Almighty Protector of innocence to guide and protect her.

Her mind then became considerably calmed, although not sufficiently so to permit her to sleep. During the night the idea of becoming the wife of a man whom she could not esteem perpetually obtruded itself on her imagination, but as she could see no earthly means of avoiding it without absolutely rebelling against the authority of her grandfather, who, except on this occasion, had always treated her with extreme tenderness and affection, she resolved with as much fortitude as she could command to submit to her uncontrollable destiny. The struggle, however, was too great for her harassed frame, and her aunt on visiting her in the morning found her in a high fever, and learning the cause, at once set off to reason with her brother, and secure a reversal of his command. She found him in his study, but all her arguments were unavailing.

"I am in the habit," said he, "of examining and judging for myself; ay, and of determining for myself too, and my determination on this affair is already fixed. Ellen is my child—and me she must obey until Sir Geoffrey Carebrow obtains a prior right to her obedience."

Here Mrs Brown burst into tears. "I weep," said she, "when she had somewhat recovered from her emotion, for your delusion. But, ah! I weep more for the misery which, I perceive, awaits your unfortunate child—O, my brother, reflect—"

"I will hear no more," said O'Halloran, "lest you stagger my resolution, which, as it is founded on reason, I am determined shall never be shaken by feeling."

He then hastily left the room, evidently as much agitated as Mrs Brown herself.

The allotted eight days elapsed, and Ellen consented to become a victim; "For," said she, "I will die before I disobey you. Oh! my grandfather, did you know what I at this moment suffer, you would have compassion on me!"

She was able to speak no more: she had fainted. In great consternation O'Halloran and Sir Geoffrey called for assistance; for they had been both present urging her to compliance. She soon recovered, and on seeing her restored, the strength of her grandfather's determination, which her swoon had somewhat shaken, was also restored, and the day was appointed for the marriage.

The agitation of Ellen's mind now greatly subsided. She had nothing more for which to hope, and she awaited the awful hour in the calm silence of despair. Her aunt was her only comforter; but she also stood in need of comfort. At her request, Miss Agnew was invited to the castle, to encourage and support her afflicted friend through the horrors of the approaching ceremony.

On understanding the circumstances of the case, all the sprightliness of this lively young woman forsook her; and although she would not desert her friend, she determined to partake of no festivity on the occasion.

"It will be a wedding," said she to O'Halloran, "that ought to be solemnised as a funeral, with the emblems of grief, for it will be death to the happiness of the loveliest maiden in the land."

"I trust not," he replied; "the consciousness of doing her duty will, of itself, be a source of happiness, and her husband's worth, tenderness, and affectionate assiduities will soon obliterate this unreasonable, girlish prejudice against him, which occasions her present distress. We shall yet see her the happy, loving wife of a worthy man."

"In that case she will not be the wife of *this* man," retorted Miss Agnew, with something of her usual keenness and levity, mingled with bitterness and grief.

CHAPTER IX.

On the second day previous to that appointed for the marriage, the Recluse came to the castle, and requested an interview with Ellen. He was admitted into her chamber, for she was too unwell to leave it. She was alone. He was shocked at the alteration which a few weeks had made in her appearance. She who so lately was blooming in the luxuriance of health and beauty, now appeared before him the image of death, pale and emaciated, and sunk in almost speechless sorrow. His heart smote him. "I have neglected thee too long," said he; "but if Heaven permit thee to live, it is not yet too late to save thee from misery."

"Father, what wouldst thou say?" she asked, scarcely understanding him.

"My child, if this dreaded marriage be the cause of thy affliction, I will deliver thee from it," he replied.

"Ah! thou canst not," said she, "unless my grandfather withdraws his injunctions; for I must obey him."

"Thy grandfather will never enjoin thee to be wretched," said he.

"Alas! sir, he does enjoin it."

"Then disobey him," exclamed the Recluse, with energy, "O thou best of daughters, and the sin be on my head!"

"What sayest thou?" cried she, starting, "wouldst thou counsel me to disobedience?"

"I would, and will save thee from ruin," he replied. "Thy own father, my child, has the first claim on thy obedience; and he forbids thee, as thou wouldst value his blessing, to become the wife of Sir Geoffrey Carebrow."

"What? Oh sir," she cried, "does my father live? Does he know of my misfortunes? Am I, indeed, so happy?"

"He lives," said the Recluse; "and no danger will prevent him from rescuing and protecting thee. For what other end can he live?"

"Oh! sir, where, when shall I see him? Where shall I fly to him? Only let me embrace him, and I will bless thee."

"Yes, beloved of my heart," he returned. "Daughter of my Eliza! thou shalt embrace him. Behold thy father in this disguise! I once saved thee from insult, I shall now snatch thee from wretchedness."

"Oh father," cried she, straining him to her bosom, "why did I not know thee sooner? O God! thou art merciful—my father lives! Now let me die in his arms, since I have indeed seen him. I am no longer an orphan."

Here her head sunk on his breast; for the shock of her joy was almost too powerful for her debilitated frame; but the rays of delight soon sparkled from her dark eyes; and the flush of joy again beamed on her countenance. "It is enough," cried she. "Kind Heaven! I thank thee. I cannot now be unhappy. Take me with thee, my father. Let me live alone under thy protection."

Her father now explained to her the necessity for his remaining concealed, on account of a sentence of outlawry under which he lay, for having killed Sir Nicholas Carebrow, the elder brother of this Sir Geoffrey, in a duel.

"To avenge an insulted, virtuous, and tenderly beloved wife," said he, "I fought him, and his death was the expiation of his offence. His friends raised a prosecution against me. I was obliged to fly. Should his brother discover that it was your father who thwarted his designs on you I should have either to leave the country, and once more deprive you of my protection, or become the victim of his revenge."

"Oh! my father," said she, "I will save thee—I will become his wife on condition that he shall cancel this prosecution, and procure a reversal of the outlawry."

"No, my child! You shall not make such a sacrifice. Better I should die than see such a day! In my present concealment I am safe, and in residing so near you I am happy."

"Father! be it as you will. Instruct me in your wishes, and I shall obey them."

It was then arranged that her father should write to O'Halloran and enclose it to Ellen. The father and daughter then parted—the former to seek his cavern house, and the latter to pour forth the fulness of her delighted and grateful heart to her heavenly Father for this signal instance of his merciful interposition in her favour

When her aunt and Miss Agnew visited her they were surprised to find her so cheerful, but still more so when, without betraying her father's secret, she assured them that the hateful marriage would not take place.

"Heaven be praised for such an escape!" cried Miss Agnew. "We shall again be as merry as crickets; and laugh at the old curmudgeon of a disappointed knight."

The buoyancy of this young lady's spirits now burst forth unrestrained, as if to make amends for their late depression; and she had wrought her companions into such a state of good-humour, when O'Halloran entered towards the evening, that he was both surprised and delighted.

"You are at last reconciled, my dear Ellen?" said he, "to this indispensable step."

"Obedience to your commands shall always yield me pleasure," she replied.

Before he could answer, a servant entered with a letter for Ellen, which, he said, a stranger had just brought to the castle.

On opening it she found one enclosed for O'Halloran. "I expected this," said she, as she handed it to him, "only within these few hours. I believe it will reveal to you the cause of my present satisfaction, I have received intelligence that my father lives and prohibits my marriage with Sir Geoffrey Carebrow."

O'Halloran broke the seal and read the letter in the hearing of all.

When he had done so, silence for a few minutes ensued. The ladies were struck dumb with amazement. At length O'Halloran approached Ellen. "My child," said he, "I rejoice that your father still lives. His interference on this occasion is, perhaps, fortunate. I shall inform Sir Geoffrey that I no longer possess the requisite authority to constrain your acceptance of him." He then withdrew.

Immediately on leaving the ladies, O'Halloran despatched a messenger to Sir Geoffrey requesting his attendance at the castle as early as convenient the next morning. On his arrival he acquainted him with what had taken place.

"I thought it right," he observed, "to lose no time in giving you information, that you might be occasioned no disappointment that I could prevent in your arrangement for the solemnity."

With eyes flashing fire, Sir Geoffrey started to his feet. "Then you withdraw all control over your granddaughter in this case?" he demanded. "I do," was the laconic and firm reply. "And Francis Hamilton, my brother's murderer, is now in the country," exclaimed the rejected knight, "and has caused this; but I shall find him, and dreadful will be my revenge."

O'Halloran was thunderstruck at such a manifestation of malignity in the man he had lately so much esteemed. He fixed his eyes stedfastly on Carebrow, and calmly said, "Is this the disinterested affection you professed to bear for my granddaughter? You would show your love for her by the destruction of her father?"

Sir Geoffrey resumed his seat. He remained a few moments absorbed in reflection. He saw that O'Halloran was not a man to be frightened; and concluded that he would play a surer game by pretending to submit calmly to his misfortune.

"I am wrong," said he, "my friend. Excuse the impetuosity of my feelings. My anger was momentary. From this instant I shall cast the remembrance of the whole affair from my mind. But there is one piece of information," said he, somewhat sarcastically, "which, in my turn, I will lose no time in communicating, lest you in some of your arrangements should also be disappointed. I find it inconvenient to pay you the remaining twenty thousand pounds contracted for in the mortgage."

"That is unfortunate," replied O'Halloran, "for there is now little time to raise it elsewhere."

"The cause must then do without it," said the other.

"It will greatly cripple our exertions," continued O'Halloran; "besides, the sum being secured in the mortgage, you should in honour exert yourself to procure it, or else allow that instrument to be altered."

"As to that," said Sir Geoffrey, "the less that is either said or written on such dangerous matters, in these troublous times, the better. The mortgage cannot be altered. But do not think that I intend to defraud you. Only, now, that I think of it, our communications this evening have been mutually disagreeable. We had better, therefore, end the conference. Good-night; and recollect that, by withholding my bride, you have lost only twenty thousand pounds."

The man's real character now stared O'Halloran full in the face. He scorned to detain him, or reason with him. He therefore let him go without interruption, rejoiced that the good-fortune of his beloved grandchild had preserved her from becoming the wife of such a man.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN O'Halloran informed the other chiefs of the conspiracy of Sir Geoffrey's threat, they agreed to make no noise about it, lest by irritating a person so unprincipled, he might be induced to inform against them to the government.

To inform upon the United Irishmen was, indeed, the first impulse that actuated this man's mind on his rupture with O'Halloran, but the fate of M'Bride terrified him. Besides he was not sure which of the two parties might in the end prevail. He was, therefore, unwilling to provoke either. With respect to Ellen, he was so far from relinquishing his views upon her, that it now became his chief study how to effect, by fraud or violence, what he could not by fair and friendly means.

It was supposed by Ellen's friends that amusement and change of scene would contribute to remove from her mind the impression of her late sufferings, and hasten the restoration of her health and spirits. She was, therefore, prevailed on to accompany Miss Agnew on a visit to the residence of her father. It was in the afternoon of a beautiful day in April when they started. The fields, the groves, and the hedgerows were bursting into life, and all nature was assuming her gay and green attire, and seemed to awaken corresponding emotions in the hearts of the country people, as they alternately whistled and sang at their rural employments.

The season and the scenery recalled to Ellen's memory some simple verses she had lately received of M'Nelvin's composition; and as they rode along a fine road at an easy rate, she indulged the curiosity of her companion by repeating them.

She had scarcely finished their recital when, in a lonely part of the road, adjoining a wood, a stranger on horseback overtook them, and addressed them in a vulgar tone, and with a face of great effrontery.

"A bonnie day, ladies! Do you gang far this way?" "Only a few miles," was the reply of Miss Agnew; and for a short space all were again silent. At length another unknown horseman rode forward and exclaimed,

"D—n you, Jack, why don't you stop the driver? We have no time to lose."

Jack now drew a pistol from his pocket, and presenting it at the driver, ordered him to stop. He was obeyed.

"Miss O'Halloran," said the man who last came forward, "my employer desires the pleasure of your company to night; but being afraid that you would not come willingly, he ordered us to bring you by force. You will be pleased to get behind me, and let that other lady proceed by herself.—Confound your screaming! Gag them, Jack, or they'll alarm the whole country. Tear them from each other."

This was scarcely uttered when he was levelled to the ground by a tremendous blow of a large stick, which resounded from his head with a noise that startled the terrified ladies. Jack immediately discharged his pistol at the assailant; but the ball missed its object; and had he not instantly put spurs to his horse, he would have been the next moment as low as his companion.

"Let him go," cried the victor, turning to the affrighted ladies. "He will not molest you again this evening."

Ellen now recovered sufficiently from her terror to recognise the Green Minstrel in her deliverer.

"Tell me, tell me, kind and noble youth," said she, "to whom I am so much indebted."

"My fair mistress, replied the youth, "indulge my wish for concealment for some time. Should you again be attacked, I shall not be far off. Adieu!" and he hastily disappeared in the adjoining wood.

Having only about two miles farther to ride, by a pretty smart application of his whip, which the driver now thought proper to make, they soon arrived at the residence of the father of Ellen's companion.

When this outrage was communicated to the united chiefs, not one of them doubted that Sir Geoffrey was its author. They indeed soon had further reason to withdraw all their confidence from him. They, therefore, resolved to confine him in their cave before he should have time to do them mischief.

Before they had any opportunity of seizing him, they received despatches from Dublin, by express, containing news of a most disastrous description, which rendered it necessary for them, and for all the United Societies in the kingdom, to adopt measures of the most decisive nature.

Samuel Nelson, who was now in Dublin, and had been appointed to the chief management of their affairs, informed them that he should immediately despatch a messenger to France to hasten the arrival of the promised succours; and that for the purpose of rendering the rising as simultaneous as possible in all parts of the country, he had directed it to take place everywhere on the third day after information should be received of the stoppage of the different mail coaches proceeding from the metropolis, which should be the signal of an attack having been made there.

All was now bustle and activity among the conspirators. Nightly assemblages for drilling the peasantry in the art of war were held more extensively and frequently; and every smith who had joined the confederacy became busily employed in the manufacture of pikes, and in the repairing of muskets and other kinds of warlike instruments. The women even employed themselves in casting bullets, preparing cartridges, and making cockades and insurrectionary banners.

The immediate object of O'Halloran was to collect an additional supply of gunpowder, an article in which his district was deficient, the greater portion of what had been purchased by Sir Geoffrey's money having been distributed throughout the adjoining counties, O'Halloran's colleagues expecting, on account of their proximity to the sea, to procure an abundant and timely supply for themselves with the sum which Sir Geoffrey, according to his contract, had yet to furnish them.

Sore with the disappointment, they now breathed vengeance on the defaulter; and had he fallen into the hands of M'Cauley, Kelly, Darragh, or any other of the more desperate of the party, his life would have paid the forfeit of his delinquency. He, however, having lately become a magistrate, and knowing that he had become obnoxious to his former friends, confined himself as much as possible to his seat at Carebrow Hall, which he had the precaution to keep well guarded.

One evening he was on the point of being destroyed by Darragh and Kelly, who were indefatigable in watching for an opportunity for that purpose.

He was returning home from Carrickfergus, attended by two servants,

when, coming to the border of his demesne, he ordered them to catch a favourite colt, which had broken out of an enclosure, and was playing at large on the high road. They obeyed, and he rode alone towards the house.

Darragh and Kelly were lying in wait for him in the shrubbery that skirted the public avenue which led to the house. They were perceived by a young lad, named Nelson, who knew their design, but who, on account of Carebrow having arbitrarily turned his mother, who was a widow, and her family, of which he was the eldest, out of their little holding, at the most inclement season of the preceding winter, hated him. Persuaded that vengeance would now be inflicted on the oppressor, in the excitement of the moment he called prematurely from a tree on which he was stationed: "There, Darragh! there comes the tyrant. Now have at him."

Carebrow heard him, and instantly put spurs to his horse, which, darting over a low, clipped hedge into an open lawn, carried him at full speed towards the house.

As will be readily supposed, wrath and revenge were highly inflamed in the mind of Sir Geoffrey on this occasion; but, although he was now in the commission of the peace, and might have issued warrants for their apprehension and imprisonment, he feared their party too much to give them such provocation. He knew not but that they might in the end overthrow their opponents, and in that case he wished still to keep a door open for reconciliation with them.

He, therefore, conceived it to be his interest, while he acted so as to merit the favour of the government, to give the opposite party no cause to think him their decided enemy.

His ungovernable passion for Ellen alone interfered with this wise resolution.

He knew that he was suspected for the outrage that had already been committed on her, and that, consequently, the eyes of her numerous friends and connections would be immediately directed towards him if she were subjected to another.

"She shall be mine," said he to himself, "if there be power in gold to hire assistants, and strength in steel to render them successful."

He had several conferences with one Philip Berwick, his game-keeper, and Tim Rogers, another of his domestics, who had been his instrument in the former attempt to seize Ellen, and who, for a handsome reward, was ready to renew the undertaking in whatever way he should be directed.

Their conferences resulted in the adoption of the following plan:—One of Sir Geoffrey's tenants, whose rent he attempted to raise, had a few months before relinquished his farm, and it was still unoccupied. On this place there was a tolerably comfortable dwelling-house, in a very retired situation, to which it was determined forcibly to bring Ellen, as it was believed that she could be there effectually concealed, until circumstances should permit Sir Geoffrey to carry her to an estate which he possessed in Gloucestershire in England.

CHAPTER XI.

Ellen was still on her visit at Mr Agnew's, and had recovered all her usual bloom of health and serenity of mind. She, indeed, still felt some apprehension lest the continuance of Sir Geoffrey's passion should find out some means of disturbing her repose; but as her friends were numerous and vigilant, she confided in their zeal and ability to protect her, and did not permit this apprehension to repress the natural cheerfulness of her temper, or damp the joy she experienced from the discovery of her father, from her own deliverance from the persecutions of her tormentor, and her rescue from the violence of his menials. The brave author of this rescue, her Green Minstrel, her Shamrock Knight, was never absent from her thoughts.

"Ah!" said she to Miss Agnew, "if this young man were to reveal himself I fear that my Edward would possess only the first share in my affections. I do not know how it is, but I almost feel as if I had two hearts, one to bestow on each of these objects, for (I am indeed ashamed to confess it) this noble youth intrudes himself on my mind almost as often and as intensely as he to whom my first affections have been pledged, and to whom they must be for ever faithful. O! would to Heaven that he were Edward, or Edward he!"

"You have started an odd notion in my mind," said her companion, "that they are, indeed, the same person. If they are not, they must be twins; for now when I think of them, I protest that you two stars do not more resemble each other."

This conversation took place one evening about the beginning of May, as these two young ladies walked together to visit a poor sick man, who lived in the neighbourhood.

Certain circumstances connected with the illness of this man led them to talk of the murder or suicide of a young woman named Robbins, whom Sir Geoffrey was reported to have ruined.

"It is a dreadful tale, Maria," said Ellen, "I remember the report of her death; and have often wondered that its perpetrator has never been discovered."

"I believe," said Maria, "that there were no other grounds for suspecting Sir Geoffrey, than that he had for some time previous paid unusual attention to the young woman, who is said to have been remarkably handsome, and that immediately after the occurrence, he withdrew from the country, and ever since continued, until the beginning of last winter, to reside abroad."

"Thank Heaven! I have escaped uniting myself to such a man," ejaculated Ellen.

At that moment, a man in a gig approached them at full gallop, followed by another on horseback. The ladies stood still to allow the travellers to pass; but the former stopped the gig suddenly on coming towards them.

"Fortune favours us!" cried he. "Let us seize her at once, and be off."

So saying he sprang out, and with the assistance of the horseman, hastily secured Ellen in the gig, when, gagging her with a large handkerchief, he turned his horse and drove away at full speed.

Miss Agnew, in a state of terror and distraction, fled and screamed for assistance; but before she could make herself properly understood, by those who flocked to her aid, her friend was far off. Sir Geoffrey being suspected for this outrage, a pursuit commenced in the direction of his residence; but without success. The ruffians had taken an unfrequented road which led them directly to the untenanted house before mentioned. The villain in the gig did not speak a word to his captive, either by way of threat or conciliation, until they arrived there.

"You are safe now, madam," was his first observation; "and, thank Heaven, we are safe too."

A light was soon struck and a fire kindled, when Ellen, for the first time, recognised the two men as those who had before attempted to seize her.

"I am at length undone!" cried she, the gag being now taken out of her mouth. "For God's sake, have mercy on me! Deliver me to my grandfather, and you shall be rewarded to your utmost desire."

"We know better, ma'am," replied one of the fellows. We shall be better rewarded for keeping you. You may as well be quiet. Here nobody can hear your noise, and come to your rescue, as that fellow in green did the other week."

Ellen laid her head on a table that was near her, and relieved her bursting heart with a flood of tears, that fortunately came to her relief. On looking up after some time, she perceived that one of the men had left her; but the other sat between her and the door, and coldly remarked that as she must be fatigued, she was perhaps disposed to go to bed.

"There is a bed in this closet," said he, as he opened a door that led into a small apartment. "It is a comfortable one, and expressly prepared in expectation of your using it."

She meditated for some time in silence. At length, under the impression that she would be freed from the observation of her jailer, she thought proper to retire.

"Won't you have a light, ma'am?" asked the man. "No," said she, and she closed the door of her apartment without waiting for more questions.

She threw herself on her knees, and addressed her supplications to that God who had more than once vouchsafed her deliverance from similar distresses.

In a somewhat calmer state of mind, she threw herself on the bed, and with a trembling frame and agitated heart, passed a sleepless night. The morning only brought an increase of her sorrow, for it brought the detestable Sir Geoffrey himself.

"Sweetest of thy sex," said he, "behold in this reluctantly adopted and disagreeable measure, the violence of my passion. I cannot live without you. Be mine; make me happy as your husband; accept of me on any conditions you may prescribe."

"Barbarous, wicked man, I know you now too well ever to link my fate with yours. Had I known you sooner, you should never have received even the reluctant civilities that were once extorted from me."

"My wish must be gratified!" he exclaimed. "Either voluntarily make me happy, or know that force will compel you. I will give you to this evening to decide."

"Infamous man! do you insult me by calculating on my deliberate acquiescence in guilt? Think you that there is not a God who can blast you ere your crimes be accomplished!"

"Sorceress!" cried he, "you hate me and defy me; but your beauty has enchanted my senses. I am mad with love! I will not postpone my bliss."

So saying, he clasped her in his arms with a force and vehemence that made her tremble, and she screamed hopelessly but instinctively for help.

"It is in vain for you to resist," said he, releasing her for a moment. "My mind is too fiercely bent on you, to leave you without being satisfied. He again attempted to seize her; but with a desperate effort she sprang from him.

"O God," she exclaimed, "if man cannot hear me, thou canst! Save me! Save me from the murderer of Robbins."

"What mean you by that name?" said he, for a moment struck almost motionless by the sound.

"To awaken thy guilty conscience," she replied, "and prevent thee from being twice a murderer."

"Girl, 'tis false," he cried, in great agitation. "Thou art a fiend; but thou art a beautiful one, and thy charms shall now recompense me for this pang."

In saying this, with the fury of a tiger, he darted upon her and threw her on the bed.

At that moment a confusion of voices were heard outside of the house, and instantaneously, the shock of a door bursting from its bolts, which was immediately followed by the discharge of a pistol in the outer room.

"Ah! villain, is it you? Receive this! Where is the lady?" was exclaimed by a voice familiar to Ellen.

"She maun be in that room, gin she's on earth," was replied by a coarse female voice, and the next moment the door was laid on the floor with a dreadful crash; and the Green Minstrel appeared.

"Horrible monster!" cried he, seizing Sir Geoffrey by the throat, have you ruined that angel?"

"Mercy! murder! I have not injured her," stammered the terrified and half-strangled knight.

"It is well for you. This hour would else have been your last," replied the Minstrel, and he dashed him to the floor with a force that made the house shake. Then turning to Ellen, "Sweet maid, are you safe?" he inquired.

"Thank Heaven, I am! My deliverer again! How providential was this!" she replied.

"Thank Heaven, indeed," said he, and he pressed her hand to his lips.

At that instant she screamed, and casting her arms about him, with a sudden effort moved him from his position, and received the point of a dagger in her neck. It would have entered deep enough to have terminated both her sorrows and her life, had not the timely interference of Peg Dornan arrested the blow.

"The curse o' God on ye for a murderer!" exclaimed Peg, "you thocht to kill the bonniest lad, an' ye hae killed the bonniest lass in the land. The Minstrel turned round, and beheld the dirk in Sir Geoffrey's

hand, with Peg Dornan struggling to force it from him. He also perceived it stained with the blood of his beloved. "Fiend," cried he, wresting the weapon from him; and again dashing him to the floor, he held him firmly there with his foot fixed on his neck. Jemmy Hunter at that moment entered. He had been employed in binding the legs and arms of Tim Rogers, Sir Geoffrey's servant, whom the Minstrel had knocked down in the outer chamber, on the firing of the pistol. Hunter performed a similar operation on Sir Geoffrey with great coolness and dexterity, remarking, "I wish, frien', I was tyin' this rape aboot your neck, to gie you the weicht o' your carcass at its end."

Ellen had swooned, and while Peg was running for water to sprinkle on her face, the Minstrel, who believed her to be really dead, leaned over her with tears gushing from his eyes.

"Purest, loveliest of created beings," cried he, "thou art gone to a world more worthy of thee. Thou hast left thy lover. But, O! thou wert snatched from him too soon. Thou wert the delight of mine eyes, the hope, the joy of my heart—this widowed heart, that shall now never more know peace."

"Dinna' lay it sae much ta heart," said Hunter. "You shouldna' vex yoursel' sae. It's no reasonable to *greet* like a woman (the tears at the same time swelling in his own eyes), though it's a sair an' sorrowfu' sight—for she was a weel-faured guid young lady. But ye maunna' talk o' deeing. Ye maun leeve to bring this wicked limb o' hell to the hemp rape for this wark."

Peg Dornan had now returned, and was bathing Ellen's temples and cheeks with some spirits which she had found in the outer room, when she opened her eyes and began again to respire. The Minstrel, who had watched her with the anxiety of despair, gave a shout of joy.

"My love!" said he, "speak to me. Do not you know your Edward, your Middleton, your Barrymore, your Minstrel? Live, my love, and never will I leave thy side till this execrable wretch be secured beyond the power of injuring you more."

She held out her hand to him. "I am happy," said she, "to see you living. Ah! I thought the steel had entered your body. But Heaven has been more merciful. You are indeed my Edward, my Minstrel, my preserver. None else can ever be my love."

Edward kissed her hand fervently. Now, indeed, he felt happiness. What a contrast! He who had the moment before been sunk into the lowest depths of misery, would not now have exchanged feelings with the proudest monarch in Christendom.

The agitation of our lovers soon began to subside. Ellen's wound was dressed. It was found to penetrate very little deeper than the skin, for the timely interference of Peg Dornan had given such an oblique direction to the stroke, that it had inflicted only a superficial injury, which threatened no ill consequences. Her swoon had been occasioned solely from the supposition that Edward was murdered.

Peg Dornan had by this time discovered some wine and other articles of refreshment in the house, of which Ellen partook, and in a short time her strength was sufficiently restored to admit of her being removed.

Edward had been slightly wounded by the contents of a pistol which Berwick had fired at him on entering the house; but during the hurry and excitement of the preceding scene he had paid no attention to the

wound; he now, however, found it necessary to have it dressed. This was soon accomplished, and he was able to escort Ellen to her grandfather's, where she wished to be taken.

They were now under some embarrassment as to the disposal of their prisoners. Hunter would have carried them to a magistrate for the purpose of having them committed to jail. But Sir Geoffrey threatened that if they did so, he would bring immediate destruction on O'Halloran, by disclosing his treasonable practices to the government.

While they were in this perplexity, the Recluse and M'Nelvin arrived. They had heard of Ellen's seizure, and suspecting Sir Geoffrey to be its author, had hastened to Carebrow Hall. M'Nelvin alone entered the house, and discovered from one of the servants where Sir Geoffrey had gone that morning. "I wonder what he is going to do there," observed the servant, "for it's a waste farm!"

M'Nelvin made no answer; but joining the Recluse, they hastened as fast as possible, to the place, and arrived just at the point of time we have mentioned.

They were of opinion that it would be proper to effect the removal of the captives without delay, lest some of Sir Geoffrey's domestics might arrive and occasion them trouble, nay, perhaps, effect his rescue. It was therefore determined to deliver him and his fellow culprit into the hands of O'Halloran, to be dealt with as the leaders of the United Irishmen should think proper. They accordingly proceeded by a private road to Mr Agnew's, from whence, as soon as night came, their prisoners could be conveyed, without risk or difficulty, to their destination.

CHAPTER XII.

As the party proceeded to Mr Agnew's, the lovers found an opportunity to ride at some distance from the rest of the company, and enjoy the luxury of a private conversation. Ellen expressed her fears lest Edward should, even under the disguise of a minstrel, be recognised by the United Irishmen, and involved into fresh troubles.

"I keep so close," said he, "that except when the necessity of serving you requires it, I never leave my concealment, and, on such occasions, this habit has hitherto been an effectual disguise; and you will acknowledge that my general hiding-place is well-chosen, both in point of security and enjoyment, when I inform you that it is the Recluse's cavern."

"That cavern is, indeed, an endeared spot to me," said she, and she coloured as she spoke, "since it is the asylum of my two best and dearest friends."

"Ah! my heart's best treasure," exclaimed Edward, "how happy you make me in accounting me one of that sacred number!"

"Permit me," said she, wishing to give a different direction to the conversation, "permit me to inquire how you discovered me this morning; and also how you appeared so fortunately to rescue me on a former occasion?"

"You know," said he, "that after my escape from the United Irishmen, I kept up a constant correspondence with the Recluse, by whom I was informed of everything that happened to you. When

he mentioned the persecution you suffered from the addresses of Sir Geoffrey, and that your grandfather exerted his authority over you in his favour, I anticipated some misfortune, and resolved to visit your neighbourhood, to watch over your safety, and rescue you from any calamity that might befall you. To effect this, it was necessary for obvious reasons, to disguise myself. After my return home, I had employed one of Arthur O'Neil's pupils to give me instructions on the harp; and having become a tolerable performer, I adopted the habit and profession of a minstrel. I arrived at the Recluse's cavern in the beginning of March, and, by M'Nelvin's management, was admitted as a harper in the castle, at the celebration of St Patrick's Day, on which occasion you so signalised me, as to excite the envy of my competitors. When I heard that you had consented to become Sir Geoffrey's wife, I became almost distracted, and, had you married him, I should have fled my country never to see it more. It was then that the Recluse, in pity to my sufferings revealed to me his relationship to you, and assured me that as he knew your consent had proceeded from a deference to parental authority, he would interfere with an authority of that description which you would esteem more imperative than that of your grandfather. The happy consequence of his interference I shall never forget. Aware that your tormentor would adopt other methods of possessing you, I determined to keep a close watch on his motions. For this purpose I had recourse to Peg Dornan. Of her zeal in your cause I was aware, and of her prudence in such matters, I had before ample demonstration. She readily undertook the office assigned her, and has discharged it with fidelity and success. It was she who informed me that Berwick and Rogers had engaged to be the instruments of Sir Geoffrey's villainy. Accordingly, when you set off for Mr Agnew's, I followed you. It was fortunate I did so. But you know the result.

"Since your visit to Mr Agnew's, that I might be convenient to you, I have resided about half-a-mile distant, at the house of an old widow, a strenuous friend to the United Irishmen, who has carefully and kindly concealed me, under the persuasion that I am proscribed by the government, and hiding from its power. Conceiving that if Sir Geoffrey renewed his attempt to seize you, he would do it in a more formidable manner than before, I thought it prudent to provide an assistant, in whose courage and fidelity I could depend. You will readily agree that I could not have found one better qualified in these respects than our honest farmer, James Hunter. He engaged ardently in the affair, and without hesitation took lodging beneath the same roof with me, under a similar plea. Peg Dornan, who, of course, knew where to find us, came to me this morning breathless, and in great agitation, and informed me that when in Sir Geoffrey's kitchen, she had overheard Rogers telling his master that you were safe in Gorman's.

"I immediately summoned Hunter. Our horses were soon prepared, for we kept them in an adjoining field, ready for any emergency. As Peg alone new Gorman's place, it was necessary to take her along as a guide. She was accordingly mounted behind Hunter; and we set off at full speed. Thank Providence, our haste was not in vain. You are safe once more; and I trust your friends, in whose hands your infamous persecutor now is, will take care that he shall not again have the power to injure you."

When he had ended his recital, "Ah! generous Barrymore," she exclaimed, "what do I not owe you for so much kindness?"

"You owe me nothing," he replied. "Ah! yes;" he continued, "I do ask for the vastness of my love, not for any services, the most valued, the most precious reward this world can afford me; I ask thyself!"

A burning blush glowed on the countenance of Ellen; but she replied not. Their arrival at Mr Agnew's prevented her. To the questioning eye of Edward, however, her look had spoken a reply a thousand times more satisfactory than could have been conveyed in the strongest language.

For reasons well known to his friends, Edward now disappeared. He returned to his hospitable widow, and conferring on her an unexpected reward, told her that he must, with his companions, seek a new residence for a few weeks. When night came he assisted his friends to convey the culprits to O'Halloran Castle, and then retired with the Recluse to his subterranean dwelling.

Sir Geoffrey and his worthy tool, the gamekeeper, were soon secured in the conspirators' stronghold, within the Point Rock; but met with very different treatment from what Edward had received, when confined in the same place the preceding year. The chiefs, on first receiving him, secured him by a chain, in a dark apartment, where he had only straw for a bed, and was fed on bread and water. His servant was treated more leniently, as being only an instrument in the hands of the superior criminal. At length, Sir Geoffrey consented to purchase greater indulgence, by giving O'Halloran an order on his Dublin banker, for the twenty thousand pounds of which he had attempted to defraud him.

Edward having thus secured the object of his affections from the further aggressions of her tormentor, thought of returning to Dublin. He believed, that by ingratiating himself with the executive authorities of the day, he might acquire sufficient influence to protect O'Halloran, should he fall into the hands of the government. To do so he thought it necessary to return to the capital; which he did with the less reluctance, as he knew that he left Ellen under the protection of the watchful eye of her father, the affectionate sagacity of M'Nelvin, and the energetic and faithful arm of Jemmy Hunter. Of every important occurrence, he also knew that he should receive the earliest intelligence, and could act accordingly.

During the parting interview he had with Ellen in her father's cave and presence, while under the influence of the warm feelings the occasion excited, he solicited strongly for an immediate marriage.

Ellen, however, declared that in the present critical state of her grandfather's affairs, she could not consent to such a measure without his approbation; "and you are aware," said she, "that to obtain that, the obstacles are insurmountable."

Her father also declared that he would not consent to a private union, which, however fair and valid, would carry with it something of a clandestine and improper air, and which might, from that very circumstance alone, be displeasing to Edward's relations. "No," said he, "my young friend, let the crisis of the times be past, let the fate of this conspiracy be decided; and when the storm which it raises is blown over, and the affairs of our country again become calm and settled, I shall pro-

mote your views of domestic felicity; and publicly, perhaps (for Providence may by that time restore me to society), have the pleasure, with the approbation of your friends, of bestowing my daughter on you, and giving you both a father's benediction."

Edward acquiesced, having first obtained from Ellen an assurance that she would comply with his wishes, whenever such a period as that to which her father alluded should arrive. "But, ah! surely," said she, "this is not a time for the mirth or joy of a marriage, when our country is in sorrow. Ah! my Edward, I fear we have numerous scenes of sorrow to witness, perhaps to endure, before we can experience joy. Let us prepare our minds for the worst; but amidst our misfortunes, whatever they may be, let us be faithful to each other; for be assured that, whether in prosperity or adversity, I shall be faithful to you."

"My only love!" replied Edward, touched to the heart by her fervency, "that God, who loves purity, will avert from thee the calamities thy too timid mind forebodes; and as to the fidelity of my heart's affections, the moment of its first wandering from thee shall be that of its last pulsation." He warmly caught her hand and kissed it. "God preserve thee, my espoused," he exclaimed; "for whatever man may say or do, thou art mine in the ordination of Heaven. God preserve thee, until I see thee again!" He then rushed from her in violent agitation, and departed.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was on the evening of the 4th of June that a messenger arrived from Belfast at O'Halloran Castle. He delivered to its owner the following note, and passed on to circulate others of a similar import throughout the country.

"The signal is given. The mail coach has *not* arrived. Our informant says it was stopped yesterday at Swords. The south is in arms—Wexford is taken. Let the *rising* be on the 7th *inst.* The general rendezvous for this county is Donegore Hill. The small parties of the military quartered in the country towns, must be captured, if possible, by surprise. The bearer will proceed with intelligence along the coast. You will despatch messengers through the interior, by Ballynure, Ballyclare, Ballyeaston, Ballymena, &c. Expedition is requisite."

O'Halloran immediately assembled his coadjutors, and couriers were soon despatched agreeably to the instructions thus received.

All was now preparation, bustle, and eagerness among the populace of Larne; but every one was unusually sober, and good-humoured. Even the military were treated with more than usual complaisance, and all men were not only quiet, but apparently contented and happy.

The sixth of June, the eve of the insurrection, came. All business, every species of labour spontaneously ceased after mid-day. Towards evening an increased degree of mirth and jollity pervaded the younger part of the community; while even the more sedate and advanced in life, relaxed, or, growing weary of their thoughtfulness or their idleness, joined in athletic sports, such as wrestling, running, leaping, hurling, and various other kinds of rural pastimes.

Such an unusual degree of mirth and idleness among the people ex-

cited the attention of the friends of government, and a vague whisper of some disturbance being intended, during the night, reached the ears of the commander of the small party of military then quartered in Larne. This party consisted of about fifty of the Tay fencibles. Their captain's name was Small. In consequence of the rumour which had reached him, he, as soon as *tatto* was beat, paraded the streets with a patrol of twenty men, and compelled the people to relinquish their sports, and retire to their respective homes, under pain of being taken to the guard-house. Men, women, and children, all complied, and the streets, which a few minutes before displayed such a full scene of life, resounding with all the noise of rural mirth and manners, were now totally deserted, and as silent as the habitations of the dead. The soldiers had retired to their barracks, and a deep portentous calm continued for several hours.

During this interval a number of the most intrepid and zealous of the United Irishmen stole cautiously to their appointed rendezvous, at a place called the *Green Holme*, about half a mile from the town. Here O'Halloran and M'Cauley arranged the plan of an attack upon the barrack, the other leaders having gone off to head the insurrection in different parts of the country.

It was about one o'clock in the morning, and every thing was quiet in the town, when O'Halloran gave orders for proceeding to the attack. The band numbered about eighty, thirty of whom were armed with muskets, and the remainder with pikes. Their plan was twofold.—If the soldiers were retired to sleep, which they presumed would be the case, they should proceed at once to the assault. But if their adversaries were on the alert, they were to retreat so as to attract them in pursuit, while M'Cauley was to hasten with a body of twenty men, twelve of whom had muskets, to form an ambuscade behind the wall of a rope-factory, which joined one of the streets, and to which O'Halloran, at the head of the main body, would direct his retreat, in order to bring his pursuers between two fires.

The barrack was situated near the centre of a long street, on arriving at the upper end of which the insurgents perceived that they must relinquish their first plan, as the garrison were evidently on the watch.

In carrying out the second plan they had greater success, for, although, they failed in their object of reducing the barrack, they obtained a considerable advantage, half of the soldiers who had come out to attack them having been put *hors de combat.*

Notwithstanding his success, O'Halloran did not think it prudent, immediately, to renew the attack on the garrison. His strength was every minute increasing, and he expected in a few hours to be able to overwhelm all opposition.

The garrison, however, notwithstanding their disaster, had been joined by nearly a hundred of the town's people who were attached to the government.

O'Halloran afraid that, before he should have numbers sufficient to overcome the garrison, thus strengthened by the loyalists of the town, a detachment of the army which lay in considerable force at Carrickfergus, only nine miles distant, might come to its relief, took the precaution to station scouts on horseback on the roads leading to and from that place, so that he might have the speediest intelligence of any such detachment, and be enabled to meet it on suitable ground.

His adherents having been increased to about twelve hundred, more or less armed, O'Halloran determined immediately to renew the attempt upon the barracks.

Dividing his men into two parties, one of which he entrusted to the command of M'Cauley, he made dispositions to attack the barracks in both front and rear at the same time.

The standard of the United Irishmen was now hoisted, and they had just begun their march to the tune of "The Volunteer's Quick Step," when an accession to their strength of nearly two hundred men arrived from one of the adjoining parishes, bringing with them as a prisoner, George M'Claverty, Esq. the magistrate who, as the reader will recollect, examined Edward Barrymore so closely at the Antrim Arms, when in pursuit of the murderer of M'Bride. O'Halloran halted his men. and they hailed the arrival of their confederates and their prisoner, with loud huzzas.

On being informed of their design to attack the garrison, M'Claverty, who, although disliked among them on account of his political principles, was much respected for his other amiable qualities, attempted to dissuade them from it, and although, at first, his counsel was received with very considerable suspicion, and was declined, he, at last, succeeded in obtaining the consent of the leaders to negotiate. At their request he addressed a letter to Captain Small, enclosing one from O'Halloran and his colleagues, in which the surrender of the garrison and military stores was demanded, promising protection to the lives of all. The first reply was a determined refusal; but couched in such courteous terms, that the insurgent officers held another consultation, in which it was agreed to send a second message to the garrison, proposing to withdraw peaceably from the town, if Captain Small and the loyalist gentlemen, who were with him, would guarantee the safety of their families and properties after their departure.

Small held a consultation with the gentlemen of the town, who had joined him, and they, willing to prevent matters from coming to an extremity, advised the acceptance of the proposed terms. He, therefore returned an answer to that effect. The articles of the treaty were soon exchanged in proper form, and as nothing now remained to prevent the insurgents from proceeding to the Donegore encampment, O'Halloran, anxious to know what success his coadjutors had met with in raising the people, committed the command of the party to M'Cauley, and accompanied with ten men, well-mounted and armed, departed without delay to Donegore. Before setting off, however, he gave M'Cauley directions to bury the soldiers who had been slain in the skirmish, with due respect, in the adjoining churchyard; and to follow immediately after at a steady pace, so as to arrive at the encampment about four o'clock in the afternoon.

M'Cauley obeyed in every particular. M'Claverty was so much affected on seeing this generous proceeding, on the part of an enemy, from whom he had expected nothing but outrage and ferocity, that, turning to his fellow-prisoner, Sir Geoffrey Carebrow, he exclaimed,—

"What a pity it is that men of such generous hearts should possess such erring judgments!"

Sir Geoffrey made no reply. He and Berwick had been brought from their confinement in the Point Cave, in order to be conveyed to Donegore with the other prisoners. Those who conducted him from the cave

had diverted themselves with his fears, by informing him that he was going to be tried for his crimes by the victorious United Irishmen; and that he should undoubtedly be hanged before the evening. He was in consequence much depressed in spirits, and in no humour to interchange ideas of a pleasant nature with the more courageous and liberal-minded M'Claverty.

CHAPTER XIV.

M'CAULEY now assembled his men on a height to the north-west of the town, where he arranged them into companies, and then proceeded to Donegore hill.

They had scarcely departed, when a detachment of cavalry, about eighty in number, who had been for some time concealed behind the heights to the southward of the valley in which Larne is situated, entered the town in great fury, under the command of a Captain Claverill, and was preparing, in the wantonness of revenge, to set fire to the houses, when Small informed them of his treaty with the insurgents, and declared that he would, with all the force under his command, cause it to be respected.

By this firmness the town was saved from the destroying hands of barbarians, who had not the courage to show themselves while it was occupied by that enemy whom they now affected to despise and detest.

At about eleven o'clock, O'Halloran arrived at the rebel encampment. He had expected to find thousands assembled; but found only about a hundred and fifty men busily employed entrenching the ground. These, however, informed him that, less than half an hour before, upwards of five thousand men had marched thence, under the command of Porter and M'Cracken, for Antrim, in order to dislodge the military stationed in that town, and to capture a number of magistrates who were to meet there that day on some county business.

At this intelligence, O'Halloran's heart leaped light within him. He put spurs to his horse, and followed by those who had attended him from Larne, hastened after the insurgent army. He overtook it at the entrance of the town, where it had halted to form its plan of attack. His arrival was hailed by loud cheers from the assembled multitude: and Porter, M'Cracken, and all the other chiefs, as well as the whole body of the insurgents, with one voice, requested him to assume the command.

He consented, on condition that Porter and M'Cracken should be considered as having equal authority, as well as equal responsibility.

O'Halloran now reviewed the strength and appointments of his own party, and found that it consisted of between seven and eight thousand men, who were promiscuously armed with pikes, muskets, swords, hay-forks, &c. They had also two small pieces of cannon, with some experienced cannoniers, who had formerly been in the royal service, to manage them.

By people from the town, he was informed that Major Siddons, apprised of the intended attack, had drawn up his men in the main street, in the open area, between the market house and the entrance of the street, his cavalry forming a compact body in front of the market-house, and his infantry lining the sides of the street.

On hearing this, O'Halloran made a short encouraging address to his men, which he concluded by observing that they were to fight this battle almost in view of the residence of William Orr. "Let, therefore," cried he, "our word of battle be, *Remember Orr!*"

He now selected five hundred men, whom he put under the direction of Samuel Orr, the brother of their favourite martyr, with injunctions to take a circuitous route towards the Shanes Castle road, and enter the town from the south-west, while the main body should, as soon as they ascertained the proximity of Orr's approach to the enemy, enter from the eastward by the road on which they were already stationed; by which means the enemy would be attacked on both sides.

Having made all further dispositions, and having no time to lose, as he understood the loyalists were in momentary expectation of a reinforcement from Belfast, O'Halloran, on ascertaining that Samuel Orr's detachment had nearly reached its destination, rode up to the van exclaiming, "Lead on my boys! *Remember Orr!*"

"REMEMBER ORR!" was reiterated by the whole multitude, and they immediately moved forward.

On arriving at the end of the street, whence they had a full view of the enemy, they fired both their cannons and their muskets with such effect that about twenty of the dragoons, ten or twelve of the infantry, and all the men who were stationed at one of the enemy's cannons were killed. The fire of the troops did comparatively little execution, the insurgents having chiefly withdrawn themselves behind the corner of the street. Five or six, however, were killed, and one of their cannons was dismounted.

Siddons, supposing their disappearance at that moment, a mark of fear, thought to decide the affair at once by a charge of his cavalry. He accordingly gave orders to that effect; on perceiving which, the insurgent musketeers speedily retreated, as they had been directed, which encouraged Siddons hastily to advance at full gallop, calling on them as rebels, to lay down their arms and disperse.

On the approach of the cavalry, the front men of the three divisions of the phalanx that were to remain firm presented their pikes, and prevented their progress; but the other two divisions retiring in accordance to a preconcerted plan, the cavalry followed into the vacancies; and, in a few minutes, every man and horse was prostrated to the earth. A torrent of pikes which they could neither escape nor resist, rushed upon them from every direction. It was in vain that they called for quarter. Their cries were either unheard or disregarded, in the terrible tumult. The fatal war-word, *Remember Orr*, alone resounded from every quarter, and deafened the voice of mercy.

Siddons, on seeing this disaster, rode back to call his infantry into action; but they were panic-stricken, and on the appearance of Samuel Orr's party, had fled behind the wall that surrounded Lord Massareene's castle. Seeing it vain to attempt to rally cowards, and in despair for the fate of his cavalry, Siddons galloped back to the scene of slaughter, to beg quarter for such as survived, or to die along with them.

O'Halloran, who had been unable to restrain the fury of the insurgents, or to save a single horseman, perceiving his approach, and aware of his danger, burst furiously through the crowd, calling after some men who were rushing towards Siddons, to halt and not slay him; and he reached

them just in time to arrest the arm of one man who had aimed at him a deadly blow.

"I am your prisoner," said Siddons, and he held out the handle of his sword to O'Halloran, which was accepted. O'Halloran hastily gave him in charge to three men, and returned to where the work of destruction was still going on upon the cavalry. He had scarcely done so, when some of the troops firing from behind the wall where they had taken shelter, upon Siddons' guard, brought the whole three to the ground. Siddons immediately turned his horse, and in another moment was also in shelter of the castle wall.

The carnage of the cavalry was now nearly over, and O'Halloran had succeeded in saving only five from destruction. He found afterwards, however, that Porter and M'Cracken had saved seven others, but four of them were supposed to be too severely wounded to survive.

In a few minutes his attention was drawn to another fatal incident, which was taking place near the Court-house, which stood between Lord Massareene's castle, where the infantry had taken refuge, and the scene of battle. He perceived a gentleman on horseback hastily advancing, and four men rushing to attack him with pikes. He clapped spurs to his horse to save him, but he was too far distant, and before he could reach the scene, not only was the stranger wounded in several places, but three of his assailants were shot dead, by a volley fired from the troops from behind the castle wall. O'Halloran, however, approached, screened from the fire of the troops by the Court-house; and ascertaining that the stranger was the Earl O'Neil, whose private character he much respected, he caused him to be carried into a house, and ordered him to be well treated; and immediately despatching a messenger for surgical assistance, again joined his companions.

Although the insurgents had thus gained a complete victory, and were in absolute possession of the town, Massareene Castle excepted, their exultation was but short-lived. Indeed, they had scarcely time to be sensible of its existence before they were thrown into great perplexity, by the hasty arrival of some of their friends, with very discouraging intelligence. They informed them that General Nugent was rapidly advancing, and was now only a few miles distant, at the head of two thousand men, and a heavy train of artillery, in order to attack them.

Various were the opinions now given concerning what measures should be adopted.

Great clamour and confusion took place in expressing these different opinions. O'Halloran at length obtained a hearing among the principal officers, who, after several unavailing attempts to procure silence and attention amidst the irrepressible confusion of the multitude, separated themselves from it.

After deploring the unmanageable disposition of their followers, "My friends," said he, "we must, even with such materials, attempt by some means to stem the tide of misfortune, before we give up all for lost. We must not despair—brave men never despair in a good cause. No rational counsel, in my opinion, has yet been offered for your consideration. The most salutary seems to be that which advises you to march out and oppose Nugent on the field; as in so doing you might have a chance, though I think it would be but a very slight one, of overcoming so numerous and well-appointed an army as his.

"My own opinion is, that we immediately withdraw from the town, and return to the encampment at Donegore, where, during the evening, we may expect to be joined by large reinforcements from all parts of the country, and where from the entrenchments already thrown up, and the nature of the ground, no army can attack us but at a great disadvantage."

The officers acknowledged the wisdom of this opinion, and having, by great exertions, at length procured an audience from the multitude, earnestly pressed its adoption. But that multitude was now greatly diminished. More than one-half of its number had disappeared. Some were panic-stricken at the approach of so formidable an army; some were horror-stricken at the scene of carnage they had just witnessed, and could not bear the idea of seeing it repeated; while others were disgusted at the dissonance of opinion, clamour, and confusion which had taken place, and resolved not to be the last to get rid of so troublesome and perilous an enterprise.

From these various motives, while the leaders were deliberating on what measure to adopt, several thousands had withdrawn from the insurrectionary standard.

The brave phalanx, however, to whose intrepidity the victory they had gained was altogether owing, still remained. It had lost about a third of its original number. But the gallant spirits who composed it were elevated by the excitement of their successful fighting, and by the plaudits of their companions. They now received the thanks of O'Halloran, delivered publicly in the name of the other officers, and of their country, for their good conduct, and the services they had performed.

"Had others only acted with half your heroism," said he, in concluding his address of thanks, "we should now have been in possession of Massareene Castle; and, protected by its walls, we might have bid defiance to the coming enemy. As it is, we must now withdraw to Donegore, and, fortified in that position, where we shall receive large reinforcements, we can await with advantage the assault of our opponents."

A headstrong enthusiast of the name of Campbell, who had, during the battle, performed prodigies of valour, now stepped from the ranks, all covered as he was with blood and dust, and addressed O'Halloran.

"Why should we retreat?" he exclaimed. "We have gained a great victory. Let us wait for the enemy here. I'll warrant we shall give a good account of him. It is time enough to fly when we are beaten."

"Bravo! bravo!" shouted numbers of the more violent and determined. "Campbell is right! We shall fight them here!"

It was in vain that O'Halloran expostulated with them, and represented the imprudence and even madness of their determination. They could not understand his reasoning. The majority had indeed, by this time become too intoxicated to understand it, for they had plundered the ardent spirits contained in the houses of the royalists.

O'Halloran deplored their infatuation and misconduct; but he determined not to desert them.

"Perhaps," said he to Porter, "some means may yet be found to save these people. It is our duty to stand by them, and to do our best to avert their ruin."

He then told them that although he disapproved of their wishes, he would comply with them; and make an immediate stand against the

enemy. "But we must choose better ground," said he. "Will you submit to my directions? Heaven may yet grant us success."

He was answered by loud cheers of approbation, and he immediately commenced making his arrangements on the outskirts of the town, for receiving the enemy. After having completed them, and exhorting them to firmness and bravery, he reminded them that Donegore Hill was the place of rendezvous, to which, in case of a defeat, every man should be careful to direct his course.

He had scarcely finished this exhortation when the eastern hill, at the distance of about a mile, began to glitter in the sun, and a forest of bayonets appeared gradually approaching. The whole hill became covered with the scarlet uniforms of the royal troops, who kept steadily advancing to the military music of "Croppies lie down." They halted when within a quarter of a mile from the field occupied by the insurgents.

As yet not a shot was fired, and every voice was silent for a few minutes; but this pause was indeed short; for on the other side whence no enemy was expected, a large body of both horse and foot made their appearance, under the command of Colonel Lumly.

In a moment the cannons opened their mouths, and a destructive fire was at the same instant poured by Lumly's troops on the unfortunate insurgents. The cannon of the latter was also fired; but it was only once, for their cannoniers either fled or fell. The musketeers and pikemen also started up to fly; for a fiery death was around them, and fast enclosing them on all sides.

As Lumly's party occupied the road by which they endeavoured to escape, O'Halloran, at the head of a considerable number of pikemen, the majority of whom belonged to his heroic phalanx, made on it a rapid and resolute charge, which succeeded in throwing it into confusion, and opened the way for escape.

O'Halloran, individually, fought with wonderful energy and success. Twice when Lumly had rallied a portion of his troops to arrest his progress, at the head of his chosen body did he break his way through. A third time Lumly attempted it, and it proved fatal to him.

"That officer must be slain or we shall not escape," exclaimed O'Halloran, who perceived the whole of Nugent's force fast approaching from behind; and as he made the exclamation, he dashed his horse forward, and Lumly and he instantly met. Their swords were in a moment shivered to pieces, but a stump of O'Halloran's still remained, with which, at one blow, he brought his antagonist to the ground.

"To Donegore, my men!" said he. "Stop for nothing." And without minding the fallen Lumly, they rushed over him with the speed and ferocity of wild animals, presenting a terrible front of pikes, which cleared the way as they flew along. Lumly's party seeing their commander fall, did not, however, offer much more opposition, so that the way was easily kept open for their flight. Nugent now despatched his cavalry in pursuit of the fugitives, who, soon scattering, fled in all directions; not, however, until numbers of them had fallen victims to the carbines of the pursuers.

Such of the wounded of the insurgents as had fallen into the hands of the victors were carried to the court-house, and in a summary manner tried by martial law, and sentenced to die the next morning. Between

seven and eight hundred of them had been killed during the day, and between eighty and ninety were now under sentence of death.

Of the military, about one hundred and seventy had fallen in both actions. But the deaths which the royalists most lamented were those of Lord O'Neil and Colonel Lumly. The latter, on being unhorsed by O'Halloran, had received a mortal stroke with a pike from one of the insurgents, another of whom had rolled him into the ditch by the road-side, where, after the conflict was over, he was found by some of the soldiers just expiring.

Lord O'Neil suffered extremely from his wounds until the next morning, when he also expired. He had begged Nugent, almost with his last breath, to spare the lives of the deluded people, and not to permit any feelings of revenge to excite him to unnecessary severity in the execution of his duty. For the prisoners now under sentence of death he particularly pleaded, and their lives had been granted to his intercession.

CHAPTER XV.

O'HALLORAN, after the discomfiture of his forces, rode in company with M'Cracken, Porter, and a few others, at full speed to Donegore, on reaching which he found that his old associates from Larne had just arrived. A vast concourse from other parts of the country had flocked to this rendezvous; and the number was every moment increasing, so that, before night came, it was supposed that the encampment contained no fewer than ten thousand men.

They were not all, however, equally zealous. The news of the defeat at Antrim filled some of them with considerable dismay; and a great many took advantage of the night to withdraw from such a dangerous enterprise. When the morning came, the diminution of their numbers, from these desertions, was very perceptible, and seemed very generally to shake that mutual confidence in each other, which is so necessary to the success of warlike operations. Hence doubt and perplexity began to reign over the whole camp, a circumstance which did not escape the penetration of M'Claverty. He conceived it to afford a favourable opportunity of once more attempting to dissuade them from persevering in their designs.

He was listened to with the more attention, as intelligence had just been received of the massacre of the Protestants at Wexford, and the other atrocities committed by the insurgents of the Catholic persuasion in the south.

At last, when the troops under Lord Nugent were seen approaching, the cry for negociation prevailed against all others.

O'Halloran, M'Cracken, Porter, M'Cauley, and Darragh indeed at first endeavoured to inspire the multitude with more firm and courageous sentiments. But they soon found themselves obliged to yield to the torrent, and were employed in drawing up proposals to be presented to General Nugent as the conditions of their surrender, when an officer from the royal army appeared advancing on horseback towards the hill, bearing a white flag. O'Halloran, M'Claverty, and one Watt, an influential man among them, were appointed to receive the messenger. They

accordingly advanced some distance down the hill to meet him, carrying with them the propositions they had prepared.

The officer was a Captain Hutton, an intimate friend of M'Claverty. "I have been sent," said he, "to summon these people to deliver up their arms, and throw themselves on His Majesty's mercy."

"Surely," said O'Halloran, "your commander does not expect an unconditional surrender from men with arms in their hands, strong in numbers, strong in position, and, if urged to extremity, strong also in courage and determination. To prevent the effusion of human blood, we will disperse if the requisite terms are granted us."

"I look on myself," said M'Claverty, "as a mediator in this cause. I can conceive of no detriment that the government would sustain by granting an absolute pardon to these people on condition of their returning quietly to their duty; and to accept of such a pardon, I believe, they are already convinced is to consult their true interest."

"Gentlemen," said Hutton, "I have been sent merely to demand an unconditional surrender; but whatever proposals you may please to make, I shall convey them to our commander, and return in one hour with his answer."

"Here are our proposals," replied O'Halloran, producing the written documents to the messenger. "Submit them to your general; and tell him, that rather than submit to terms less favourable than these, we are resolved, in God's name, to try the issue of a battle."

The officer received the papers, and was about to depart, when M'Claverty called on him to stay a moment.

"Convey my earnest request to General Nugent," said he, "that he will soothe the feelings of the people as much as possible. They now see their delusion, and are desirous of reconciliation with the established authorities, not so much from fear, as from conviction of their error."

"I shall with pleasure deliver your message," replied Hutton. "Good morning, gentlemen. I sincerely hope this affair will terminate without more bloodshed." He then spurred his horse, and hastened towards the royal army.

Nugent, having perused the proposals, called his officers together to deliberate concerning them. By them it was agreed that Hutton should return to the insurgent camp with the following note:—

"General Nugent, and the officers under his command, find some of the terms required by the insurgents on Donegore Hill, beyond their power to grant. They cannot interfere with the intentions of government respecting any prisoners, but such as they have themselves taken, and have in their immediate custody. These they are willing to discharge. There are several individuals in the insurgent army, already pointed out by the government as persons whose offences render them unworthy of pardon. Over the fate of these persons they have no control; neither do they think it their duty to include, in any promise of pardon, those mischievous men, whose delusive doctrines have seduced their fellow-subjects into the criminal and unfortunate measures they have adopted. From the general pardon, therefore, which they agree to guarantee to all others now assembled on Donegore Hill, who shall, within one hour after they receive this notification, deliver up their arms and return peaceably to their homes and employments, they exclude the following persons and descriptions of persons—viz., Henry O'Halloran,

the Rev. James Porter, Henry M'Cracken, Thomas Story, Thomas Archer, and all who may have been guilty of assassination, or of wantonly burning the houses, or otherwise destroying the property of the loyal inhabitants of the country."

Previous to the return of Hutton with the foregoing note, containing Nugent's ultimate offer, a man on horseback, who said he had travelled all night, arrived at the insurgent camp with a letter for O'Halloran, detailing further reverses to the rebels.

O'Halloran immediately communicated the contents of this letter to his fellow-chiefs. "It is vain," said he, "to contend longer. A battle here, even if we could persuade our men to risk one, would only be additional slaughter. A victory itself could scarcely retrieve the prospects with which we set out. It is our duty, therefore, for the sake of these people, to accept whatever conditions may be offered. For myself, should I be demanded as a sacrifice, I am resigned to my fate, and shall submit, I hope, without murmuring."

Porter and M'Cracken deliberated a few moments. They then exclaimed, "It must be so; we must yield to fate! Since we can do no more for our country, we care little for ourselves; and to whatever lot Providence has ordered for us, we shall, as becomes us, submit."

Hutton now returned with the reply of Nugent to their proposals.

O'Halloran read it aloud to the people. When he had done, all remained silent, in expectation of receiving his opinion. He perceived it, and spoke as follows:—

"My friends, you have sufficiently proved your attachment to the cause of liberty and to your country. Fate forbids that cause to prevail; and it is now become necessary for you to relinquish the pleasing hope, and yield once more to that government you have attempted to resist. These are the terms offered for your submission. You will obtain no better. From their benefits, I and some of my dearest friends are excluded. But we must give way to our destiny. I should abhor myself, if, from any personal consideration, I could be withheld from giving you what I conceive to be the most salutary counsel in your present situation. You ought to accept these conditions and surrender. I have just become acquainted with circumstances which leave you no other alternative. Our friends in the county of Down have met with a total and irretrievable overthrow. Farewell! I and my proscribed friends will provide for our own safety as prudence may dictate."

He immediately mounted his horse, and, accompanied by Porter, M'Cracken, and the other exempted persons, galloped from the hill. The multitude, struck with admiration, for several minutes gazed after them in profound silence. M'Claverty then addressed the people.

"My friends and fellow-subjects," said he, "I admire the magnanimity of your late leader, and sincerely hope that he may ultimately escape the dangers that surround him. A free pardon is offered to you. Will you accept it? The messenger awaits your reply."

"We will accept it," was answered by a thousand voices. A man of the name of Quin now stepped forward, and said aloud to M'Claverty—

"Sir, be our representative in this affair. Be it your care to prevent any infringement of these conditions."

"It shall be my care," replied M'Claverty. The people then threw their arms on the ground, and returned every man to his own home.

CHAPTER XVI.

After leaving Donegore Hill, O'Halloran and his companions did not relax their speed until they reached Ballyclare, a town about five miles distant. Here they stopped for some refreshment, and with a view to consult on what measures they should adopt for their safety. They had not rested many minutes, however, until the town was beset by a troop of horse, that had just arrived from Larne, on their way to join Nugent in his attack upon the insurgents at Donegore.

O'Halloran and his companions at once started off; but the troopers having received some intimation concerning them, they were pursued. The fleetness of their horses, however, saved them all, except Porter, whose horse stumbled and threw him, in consequence of which he was taken.

When O'Halloran and M'Cracken had reached Ballyboly Hill, about two miles distant, perceiving that the pursuit had ceased, they slackened their pace, and, each absorbed in his own reflections, rode slowly and silently until they came to a small cottage on the verge of Agnew's Hill. They stopped at the door, and a neat, clean-looking, middle-aged woman, with a child in her arms, opened it. She appeared to have been weeping, for the tears still shone in her eyes. On first seeing the gentlemen, she started, as if she apprehended some danger; but soon recognising O'Halloran, her fears vanished, and being asked if they could obtain some refreshment, she replied—

"Yes, and welcome, such as I have."

They now alighted and entered.

After resting both themselves and horses, and partaking of a hearty meal,

O'Halloran signified his intention, if M'Cracken would accompany him, to proceed, as soon as it should be dark, by unfrequented roads to his own castle, in the neighbourhood of which they might find means of concealment till an opportunity should offer of escaping to Scotland, whence they would easily obtain a conveyance to America. The advantage of being near a seaport from which means might be found to escape to another country, appeared so inviting that M'Cracken agreed to his friend's proposal. They accordingly set off as soon as it became dark, expecting to arrive at O'Halloran Castle long before day-break.

When within two miles of the castle they were surprised to find the road, at the house of a man named Howley, guarded by armed persons in military uniform, on whom they had advanced before they were aware. They turned suddenly back, and endeavoured to escape at full flight, which they would both have done, had not a shot, fired at them by one of the military, wounded M'Cracken's horse. The animal immediately fell with his rider under him, who was instantly seized by three men who had followed in pursuit of them.

"Who is your companion?" demanded they. "A gentleman," he replied, "whom I pray heaven you may never discover."

"Where were you journeying to at this unseasonable hour?" was the next question.

"To Larne," was the reply.

"We'll send you there to-morrow," said one of them, "but to-night

you must be so good as to lodge with us. Culbert and Craig," continued he, addressing two of his party who had come forward on horseback, "pursue the other runaway!"

They obeyed him with all their speed; but O'Halloran was considerably in advance of them, and knew the country so well that, although their horses were fresh and swift, he finally escaped. However, as he was now obliged, if he continued on horseback, to keep the main road to Larne, which he wished to avoid, he thought it best to abandon his horse, and seek safety on foot. He, therefore, turned into an avenue leading to a farm-house, with the principles of whose owner he was acquainted; he threw his saddle and bridle into a ditch, and turning his horse loose, betook himself for shelter to one of the outhouses.

He had scarcely secreted himself when he heard the sound of his pursuers galloping rapidly past the avenue to the house. He, therefore, conceived that he was for the present safe; and endeavoured to compose himself to rest on some straw that he found on the floor. For a considerable time the agitation of his mind, on account of M'Cracken, kept him awake; but the fatigue of his body, together with his having slept none for the two preceding nights, at length overcame him, and he fell into a slumber, from which he did not awake until he was startled by the entrance of a man in the morning.

He rose, and found that the threshing-floor of a barn had been his couch. He also found that the man whose entrance had aroused him was the owner of the place, whose sentiments and feelings O'Halloran knew to be on the side of the rebels. Recognising O'Halloran he led him off to the dwelling-house, and ordered breakfast to be prepared for him in a private room, where O'Halloran recounted to him the incidents which had brought him there.

Towards evening he was informed that M'Cracken had been sent forward to Carrickfergus, to be imprisoned in the county jail. Blair, his host, had gone himself to O'Halloran Castle to inform Mrs Brown and Ellen of the place of his concealment. In the evening, therefore, his sister visited him, the distance being little more than two miles, and it was arranged that he should seek concealment with the Recluse until he could find an opportunity of escaping to America.

As the vicinity of Howley, who, with his twelve yeomen had become very active in hunting after the proscribed rebels, was considered peculiarly dangerous, O'Halloran was that very night conveyed, with Blair's assistance, in safety to the Recluse's dwelling. His astonishment at the accommodation it afforded was strongly expressed; but the Recluse soon explained the matter.

"It is no time," said he, "to be mysterious or reserved with you. I am not the poor destitute Saunders you have hitherto supposed me to be. I am your son-in-law, Francis Hamilton. I make the explanation now that you may know how much I am interested in your safety, and to satisfy you that should your affairs take the worst possible turn, she, for whom you have hitherto displayed the tenderness and solicitude of a father, will not want a protector."

At this moment Ellen entered. "Oh, my grandfather!" she exclaimed, as she rushed into his arms—"God be praised, you are safe!"

"Yes, my child, I am yet safe," he replied, "but how long I shall be so, God only knows. But, my daughter, whatever may now be my

lot, I can bear it with resignation, since I shall not leave you destitute of parental protection. Your father has revealed himself to me; and I feel now that death has lost its sharpest sting. May the God of Heaven bless thee," he added, "and never leave thee destitute of a friend as sincerely solicitous for thy welfare as thy grandfather!"

CHAPTER XVII.

Ellen left her grandfather with her mind much relieved of its anxiety, but still labouring under the oppression of foreboding fears. The Recluse accompanied her to the castle. As it was a fine moonlight night, and O'Halloran had retired to rest, he indulged himself, on his return to the glen, in a walk along the beech. In his walk he met Peg Dornan, who at once accosted him.

"I hae been watching for you," said she, "in the glen for mair than half an hour. I'm just come wi' a' the speed my legs could carry me frae Larne to tell you, gin you ken if Mr O'Halloran be here, or near han' this place, ye maun gar him get aff before the mornin', for Claverill's dragoons, wi' Sir Geoffrey at their head, will be here, an' they will herry up every pit and cave, an' hole an' neuk, to come at him; an' mair than that, Ellen maun also be ta'en oot o' the way, for Sir Geoffrey swears that he'll hae her noo, in spite o' a' the crappies in the country."

"How did you learn this?" inquired the Recluse.

"Why, sir, I went yesterday to the toon for news o' the folk that had come hame frae Donegore. Ye ken my sin Jock was there. I was smokin' a blast, an' talkin' wi' him, quite blythe to see him, an' a' the lave hame again safe an' pardoned. Weel, thinks I, they're no sic ill bodies, thae government folk, after a', gin yin take the richt way o' them. When 'What's that, mither?' quoth Jock; an' we baith ran to the door, an' saw the dragoons galloping doon the street, wi' their drawn swords in their hands, till the very fire flew oot o' the pavement. They went to the schulemaster's hoose; but he had cannily gien them the slip. Howsomever they set to wark, hackin' and hewin', and in a crack wrecked his hoose, and ruined a' his guid plenishin' an' books, an' 'mathical instruments. Then in less time than you could say Jack Robinson, they galloped to baith the ministers, an' took them an' thirteen or fourteen ithers, prisoners. They hadna' gane to the hill; so you see the hill folk wha had the maist spirit, hae come the best aff. Nae doot the prisoners will be a' hanged, or shot, whilk is amaist as bad."

"But tell me, Peg," said the Recluse, "what you heard concerning O'Halloran?"

"Why, that's what I'm coming to," she replied. "The dragoons cam' to the barracks wi' their prisoners; an' I followed doon to see them, an' I sune observed Claverill, an' Howley, an' Sir Geoffrey talking together in a corner o' the yard. Thinks I they're hatchin' some mischief; but I'll find it oot, an' gie warnin' o't. I cannily slipt ahint a door near whare they were standin', an' heard every word they said, for I wasna' three feet frae them. They were plotting to catch Mr O'Halloran in his castle the morn; or gin he shouldna' be found there, to rummage the hale neighbourhood till they gat him. Sir Geoffrey tauld

them that gin he were within five miles of the place he could ferret him oot, for there's no a creek or cranny aboot the castle, where a cat could hide, but he said he was acquainted wi'—nor is there a den or cave in the neighbourhood, but either Berwick or he could lead to it. 'There's yin' said he, 'where the scoundrel kept me twa or three weeks, which we maun search thoroughly; and if he is nae found there, we maun ransack, to its foundation, the cell o' an auld hypocritical beggar, wha lives like a hermit. But the girl, captain, we maun hae her secured; and you know, whenever you want a magistrate to help you oot o' a scrape, I am at your command.'"

"May heaven disappoint their wickedness," said the Recluse; "but Peg we have no time to lose. I must go to acquaint O'Halloran with his danger. In the meantime, tell Jemmy Hunter to be at my cell in half an hour."

Peg proceeded to obey his directions, which she did very discreetly, and in a short time Jemmy was at the cavern. The Recluse soon informed him of O'Halloran's danger, and required that he should assist in getting him off without delay. With his usual alacrity, Jemmy consented; and through his assistance, a boat was procured, and O'Halloran was landed without accident at Brown's Bay on the island Magee in Larne Bay, and was kindly received by a warm friend of the name of Barry. In less than two hours from their setting out, the Recluse and Hunter returned, and having, with Peg's assistance, removed out of the cavern whatever could excite suspicion of its inhabitant being anything else than he seemed, to the beach, the whole was there safely buried in the sand.

How to dispose of Ellen was the next consideration. As the leader of the dragoons could have no legal, or in any respect justifiable plea for seizing her, all that was thought necessary for her protection was to convey her and her aunt, to the house of a Mr Wilson, a neighbouring gentleman of an honourable. and humane character, attached to the government; but who had not interfered with the political transactions of the times. This gentleman received them with great kindness, and when informed of the threatened depredation on the castle, he was shocked at its wantonness and barbarity, and ordered his servants to assist those of O'Halloran in removing to his house all the furniture and other articles of value they should have time to bring away.

The Recluse, also, took care to have the horses, cattle, and almost every valuable kind of stock removed from the demesne.

Early on the following morning a troop of cavalry, under the leadership of Claverill and Sir Geoffrey ransacked the castle, the rebel's cave, and the retreat of the Recluse; but, of course, without finding either of the objects of their search, and after doing as much injury to the castle as they well could, they returned disappointed and chagrined to their quarters.

But while these riotous troops were cursing their ill luck, in not meeting with the proscribed chief, that unfortunate man was already in the hands of his enemies.

As the inhabitants of the Island Magee had been deeply implicated in the rebellion, the commander of the garrison at Carrickfergus had sent a company of infantry to be quartered on them, for the purpose of detecting any such fugitives. This company had only arrived the day previous to O'Halloran's taking refuge on the island, so that its presence there was

unknown both to him and his friends. Government having offered a reward of five hundred pounds for O'Halloran's apprehension, a *tide-waiter*, named Conly, who was on a nocturnal visit of courtship to one of Barry's maid-servants, and was concealed in her chamber at the very time O'Halloran arrived, resolved to lose no time in earning the reward. He, accordingly, the next morning gave information to the commander of the troops on the island, and Barry's house being soon surrounded by a party of soldiers, O'Halloran was taken and conveyed on horseback to the county jail, in company with the informer, for that wretch knew that unless he were so protected his life would be sacrificed to the vengeance of the defeated party.

It was towards the evening, when the Recluse heard of O'Halloran's misfortune. He felt the stroke severely; but he was not one of those whom grief deprives of energy. Now was the time for serviceable action; and he would not waste it in useless lamentation. He immediately sat down and wrote as follows to Edward Barrymore:—

"The crisis is at last arrived. O'Halloran has this day been imprisoned for treasonable offences, alas! too notorious to be difficult of proof. His sentence is already certain. A court-martial at Carrickfergus will, perhaps, in a few days, pronounce it. No time is to be lost in exerting your influence to save him, and should you be successful in your application for mercy, equal expedition is requisite in making the result known, for much time, we may be assured, will not intervene between the pronouncing of the sentence and its execution.

"I am too much agitated to give you particulars, or to make comments, even if time permitted. I know not whether Ellen has yet received information of the disaster. I dread the effect it will have on her, and must hasten to her support."

Peg Dornan was employed to convey this note, and when she had been despatched with the necessary instructions, the Recluse hastened to Mr Wilson's, when he found Ellen in the greatest anxiety about her grandfather. Unable to conceal the sad news of his capture, he yet sought to comfort her, and also authorised her to inform Mrs Brown of his true character, so that that lady might have entire confidence in seeking what aid and advice he could render in this trying time.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ACCOMPANIED by Mr Wilson, Jemmy Hunter and two servants, Ellen and her aunt proceeded the next morning to visit O'Halloran. O'Halloran was confined in the county of Antrim jail, in an apartment about twelve feet square, in which he had for companions in captivity, five of the prisoners from Larne, two of whom were Presbyterian clergymen, and young Nelson who had been seized and conveyed to prison at the instance of Sir Geoffrey.

On the application of Mr Wilson to the commander of the garrison, O'Halloran's friends procured an order for admission into his apartment.

On passing the outer gate, and hurrying across the yard, which was filled with soldiers, they were shown into a long narrow gallery, at the farther end of which, on the left side, was the room which contained

O'Halloran and his fellow prisoners. The room contained no other furniture than one bed, one small table, and a few chairs, all of the most indifferent quality.. O'Halloran and the two clergymen sat on the bed, and the other prisoners on chairs. They were all pinioned.

As soon as Ellen perceived her grandfather, she rushed forward, and falling on his neck, without speaking a word, burst into tears. His sister at the same time caught one of his hands and ejaculating, "Oh! my brother!" wept also.

He entreated them to be resigned, as he assured them he was, to whatever fate was in reserve for him. "For my sake," said he "endeavour to be courageous on this occasion; for nothing will tend so much to shake my fortitude as witnessing your distress."

"With the help of God," replied his sister, "we will be resigned. But, oh, Henry! this is a terrible blow."

At this moment Claverill and Sir Geoffrey entered the room. When Ellen and her friends crossed the jail-yard, Sir Geoffrey who was conversing with Claverill and some other officers at a small distance from the gate, had observed them, and although he knew that the publicity of the place and the company that attended her, rendered it impossible for him to attempt any outrage on her person, he could not resist the desire he felt to follow her. The opportunity of being again in her presence, although it should be as an avowed enemy, was to him too great a luxury to be neglected. He, therefore, took Claverill aside; and desired him to accompany him into the jail, and he would there show him the only woman he ever considered a perfect beauty. "And you know," said he, "that I ought to be a judge of this matter, for I have been a pretty general admirer of the sex."

"This is the lady, I suppose," replied Claverill, "whom you expected to capture at the old castle, yesterday; but, by Jupiter, she had better fortune, and I am glad of it, although her granddad is a rebel. But come along; I must see this beauty of the North. Yet, hark ye! you may blackguard and threaten the other sex as you please; but to ladies, especially handsome ones, he is unworthy of wearing breeches, who would give an insult, and of wearing a sword, d—n me! who would tamely see one given."

On entering the room in which O'Halloran was confined, they found Ellen still weeping on his shoulder; and Mrs Brown holding his right hand, in all the agony of affectionate distress.

"'Fore God, sir," cried Claverill, addressing the prisoner, "I see you have got an addition to your company, and a very agreeable one too. But I think, my old Donegore general, you would be better employed in psalm-singing, or in prayer-making, than in fondling this pretty girl, now when you are on the brink of hell; for you have a tolerable account of rebellious sins to answer for when you get there."

"I am bound," said O'Halloran, looking contemptuously on him, "otherwise, captive as I am, you dared not insult me, or my grandchild, in so wanton a manner."

"Hey-day! You would still be a hero, I perceive," returned Claverill. "I like to see so much metal in your gizzard, although, my old cock, we'll try to get it out of you in a few days by breaking your neck. Nugent, after he has hanged your *cropped eared* comrades in Belfast, will be here, the day after to-morrow, and then we'll make short work of you,

As to you," turning to the clergymen, "my pious parsons, you should exhort this old rebel to restrain his temper for his soul's sake."

One of the clergymen, who was a man of spirit, replied, "Sir, over misfortune you may play the coward's part of triumphing, when you can do it with impunity. But do you suppose your general, of whom you have just spoken so insolently, will tolerate your unmanly conduct? Will he not, when we inform him of it, make you repent your having—"

"By heavens!" exclaimed Claverill, interrupting him, "I'd have you repent this audacity among your other crimes as soon as possible. So to your psalm-singing while you have breath, or the halter will soon choke your music. Come, Sir Geoffrey, let us leave the rascals. But first let us salute the ladies, by way of amends for the lectures we have received. Kiss you the old dame, and I'll kiss the young one. By Heaven!" said he, gazing licentiously at Ellen, "I must taste those rosy lips. It will be so sweet after such unpalatable lectures!"

So saying he seized her round the waist, when O'Halloran, by a violent effort, broke the cord which tied his arms, and unexpectedly struck him a blow which laid him senseless on the floor.

"By Jove! it was well done," said M'Claverty, who had just entered the moment before, and unseen by Claverill, had witnessed the rudeness he had offered to Ellen. "Had you not been beforehand with me, Mr O'Halloran, I should myself have knocked down the scoundrel."

Sir Geoffrey, without waiting to ascertain which side M'Claverty took, had hastened to alarm the guard. M'Claverty, suspecting his intention, after assisting Mr Wilson to disarm Claverill, and to drag him out of the apartment, followed the knight, and perceiving him leading a file of soldiers across the yard, he desired the jailer to refuse them admittance. He then returned to the apartment, and receiving an accurate statement of the whole transaction from Wilson, he hastened to communicate it to the commander of the garrison, from whom he obtained an order for the guard not to interfere with what had taken place.

Returning to the prison with intelligence of what he had done, he then offered to accompany the ladies to the inn, in order to show the military that he would defend them from any unwarrantable liberties. At the inn, he candidly told them that he had little expectation of any favour being extended to the prisoners, none of them being entitled to the conditions of the surrender at Donegore. "The court-martial for the trial of the prisoners here will commence its sittings the day after to-morrow. Who will be the first to suffer, I cannot tell; but, ladies," he continued, "I trust you will keep up your spirits, and not dishearten your unfortunate friends on this trying occasion. Perhaps it would be better for them and you both that you should be absent from a scene, the solemnity and horror of which, you may not be able to support."

Mrs Brown expressed the desire that Ellen should return home, but ultimately both stayed under the protection of M'Claverty and Mr Wilson.

The day for proceeding with the trials having arrived, O'Halloran and the prisoners who occupied the same apartment with him, were the first ordered to the bar; and the trial of young Nelson having been first entered upon, he was declared guilty of conspiring to murder Sir Geoffrey, and also with forcing certain of Sir Geoffrey's servants into rebellion.

The sentence was that he should the next day be taken to the house of his mother, and, in front thereof, should be hanged by the neck until dead.

O'Halloran was then put upon his trial, and at its close was sentenced to be conveyed to his late residence, and there to be hanged by the neck, till dead.

When Ellen and her aunt visited their unfortunate relative after his condemnation, they found him in an apartment separate from the other prisoners. He had requested that they would not be present at his trial, lest the horror with which they should hear his doom pronounced should overpower them, and their distress tend to weaken his own fortitude. As they expected the result, they were not surprised when informed of it. But when they visited him, the sad reality being now before them, they gave way to all the softness and affection of the female nature, and long and loudly wept beside him.

While they were thus venting their grief, a messenger entered from the commander of the garrison, requesting to know if O'Halloran desired the society of a clergyman; and, if so, to signify his commands on the subject, and they should be attended to. The attendance of one of his clerical fellow-prisoners was requested, and obtained; the other being appointed to attend young Nelson. The ladies and O'Halloran's other friends, now left him to the conversation of the clergyman, and withdrew to the inn. The next morning they again visited him. He had enjoyed a good night's sleep; was very much refreshed, and somewhat more cheerful than on the preceding evening.

"Now, my sister," said he to Mrs Brown, "I do not wish you to accompany me to-day. Let me bid you and Ellen a last adieu. After the pang of this separation, all my earthly cares will be over, and I shall have nothing to do but to die."

"We will accompany you part of the way," said they. "I would rather not," he replied; "your presence would remind me of earthly enjoyments; and I wish nothing at that period to attract my thoughts from Heaven."

"Well, then, Henry," said Mrs Brown, "farewell! in Heaven I hope soon to meet you.

"Farewell, my sister. We shall meet there;" and he embraced her. "Now, thou daughter of my only child!" continued he, turning to Ellen, "the only offspring I leave in this world; thou hast long been the darling of my heart and the object of my care, farewell! I resign thee to the care of the Almighty. May his blessing for ever rest on thee!" He then gave her a parting embrace, and her aunt and she were led out of the room by Mr Wilson and the Recluse.

It was about eight o'clock, and they had scarcely reached the inn, when the sound of military music drew their attention. They looked from the windows and beheld a regiment of infantry marching from the castle towards the jail. Their hearts sank within them; for this was the commencement of the procession to the fatal spot.

The regiment halted, and was drawn up before the jail. In a few minutes they saw Nelson brought out, on a common farming car, surrounded by soldiers. His coffin was behind him, and a man who, as they were informed, was the executioner, sat on the other side of the vehicle. It stopped a few minutes in the middle of the street; when one of the clergymen before-mentioned placed himself alongside of Nel-

son, with a Bible in his hand. In a short time another vehicle of the same sort appeared. It contained O'Halloran, his coffin and his clerical attendant. The ladies saw but one glimpse of it; for they could look no more. Their hearts became faint, their vision indistinct, and their heads swam dizzily, as they were removed from the appalling view.

The heavy monotonous sound of the muffled drums now beating time to the music of a dead march, informed them that the procession was departing on its fatal errand; and when the ladies had recovered sufficiently to look into the street, all was there as still and quiet as if nothing of importance had taken place. The procession having taken the road to Ballycarry, Mr Wilson and the ladies, attended by their servants and Jemmy Hunter, to avoid passing it, set off towards Larne, on another road.

The military, with their prisoners, halted about half a mile to the south of Ballycarry (at the northern end of which village stood the cabin in which Nelson's mother resided), to give the soldiers time to form their ranks for marching through the village. The slow pace, the dead music, and the solemn beat was again heard, and continued until the car on which Nelson was seated came opposite his mother's door. The whole then stopped, and Nelson's mother suddenly fainted in the arms of her son.

The executioner selected an ash tree, which grew near the end of the house for the gallows. The car was soon drawn forward under the spreading branches of that tree, and the murderous sentence executed.

CHAPTER XIX.

The military procession then resumed its march toward the place appointed for the execution of O'Halloran. We have already mentioned that Mr Wilson and the ladies, for the purpose of avoiding this procession, had taken another road on their return homewards. It so happened, however, that they overtook it at the entrance of Larne, where the two roads joined.

"Oh! I shall see him again," cried Ellen, "before he dies."

Mr Wilson wished his party to avoid an interview, which he said would only cause additional distress to both parties. But Mrs Brown cried out, "Since Providence has once more brought me so near my brother while he lives, I must see and speak with him."

The procession had stopped to form into ranks for marching througd the town. During this interval, Mr Wilson's carriage, containing himself and the ladies, drew forward to the car on which O'Halloran sat. Ellen and her aunt were soon in his arms, and the commanding officer, pitying their grief, postponed the march, until the first burst of their feelings subsiding should allow them to separate.

"My dear sister! my beloved daughter! do not go with us farther." O'Halloran was thus replying to their earnest entreaty to be permitted to remain with him to the last, when their attention was drawn to a man on horseback, who was galloping down the hill behind them, at a most furious rate, with the dust all rising in clouds around him as he flew along. The commander was about to desire the ladies to resume

their seats in the carriage, and to order the procession to proceed, when he perceived the advancing horseman. "It is, perhaps, some express," said he to Mr Wilson, with whom he had been conversing, "I shall delay a few minutes."

As soon as the horseman approached, "Oh! father, it is Edward Barrymore," exclaimed Ellen. "He is come to see you die!"

"Are you the commander of this party?" inquired the rider, who was indeed Edward, as he advanced hastily to Colonel Parker. "I am," was the reply.

"Then your duty is over on this occasion," said Edward, at the same time handing the colonel a letter signed by the Lord Lieutenant, accompanied with one from the governor of the fortress of Carrickfergus.

"This, I am glad to see, is a conditional pardon for our prisoner," said Colonel Parker.

"You will also observe that I am to be his jailer, until the condition is complied with," replied Edward.

"What, sir, are you the Mr Barrymore here mentioned?"

"That is my name, sir."

"Why, you were zealous indeed, to be the courier in this case."

"It was a desperate case; I could entrust no one else," said Edward.

"You were right," returned Parker, "I respect your feelings, and shall for ever thank you for taking this disagreeable business off my hands. Guards, untie the prisoner! He is pardoned."

Shouts of joy arose, and continued to rend the air for many minutes, from an innumerable multitude of people of all descriptions. Edward, in the meantime flew to his beloved, who, on the first mention of pardon almost fainted with excess of joy. He caught her gently by the arm; "Miss O'Halloran, I hope you know me?" said he. She turned round at the sound of the well-known voice. "Yes, oh yes! it is you who have saved my grandfather's life. Oh, let me thus return you thanks;" and without considering what she was about to do, she attempted to throw herself on her knees before him. But he caught her in his arms; "No, my love," he whispered, "God alone must be thanked in that posture."

"Yes!" cried she, recovering herself. "I knew not what I was doing. But I shall thank God all the days of my life, for this kind providence."

Mrs Brown now approached Edward.

"Ah! Mr Barrymore, what do we not owe you?"

"I am already fully repaid," replied the youth, as he gently pressed Ellen's hand. Immediately a burning blush tinged her countenance; and sweet confusion sparkled in her eyes. Edward now handed the ladies into the carriage, and, at Mr Wilson's request, took his seat along with them, that gentleman intending to go on foot with O'Halloran to the inn.

The party remained at the inn, only until another carriage was prepared, in which O'Halloran and Mr Wilson proceeded to the residence of the latter, followed by Edward and the ladies, amidst the blessings and acclamations of thousands of joyful spectators.

When the party, after arriving at Mr Wilson's, had partaken of some refreshments, and their minds were somewhat composed after the high excitement of the day, O'Halloran requested a private interview with Edward.

"It is a beautiful evening," said he; "suppose we walk out to the shrubbery. The free enjoyment of woodland air, after my late confinement, will be refreshing and tranquillising to my spirits. Oh! what do I not owe to your active friendship, to which, under Divine Providence, I must ascribe this unexpected happiness."

"In serving you," replied Edward, "on this occasion, I have only discharged a debt which I owed you for my life; and we have now, to speak in mercantile language, only balanced accounts."

"Ah, sir!" exclaimed O'Halloran, "my subsequent harsh conduct did more than cancel any claim I may have had on your gratitude for that service. Your magnanimity now in preserving your persecutor, demands all the atonement in my power to make. To give this explanation of the state of my feelings towards you, I have asked your privacy. I need not entreat your forgiveness, for you have proved already that you have forgiven me; but I wish to convince you of my compunction for the injuries I have done you."

"I beg," said Edward, "that you will not think of that affair. I have said that you owe me nothing. But if I have nothing to demand from obligation, I have a precious gift to ask from kindness. I love Miss O'Halloran; the hopes of my life depend on her; consent that she shall be mine, and you will make me happy; refuse me, and you will render me indeed miserable."

"Refuse you!" cried O'Halloran; "No! not if I had an empire to give you with her. But are you not too precipitate in this matter? In the first impulse of delight at your proposal, I did not recollect that you have relations rich and powerful. Have they been consulted on the subject?"

"I confess," replied Edward, somewhat embarrassed with the question, "that I have not as yet spoken to them concerning it. Having no hope of obtaining your consent to the accomplishment of my wishes, since I had incurred your displeasure, and knowing that without yours hers could not be obtained, I did not wish to acquaint my friends that I cherished views of happiness which had so little prospect of being realised."

"Then," said O'Halloran, "there are obstacles I did not before perceive; and for the sake of my child's peace, I request that this affair shall not, for the present be pushed further."

"What obstacles?" cried Edward. "I cannot think that my father will oppose me in a point which so nearly concerns my welfare. He has no son but me. He is an affectionate father, and will not command me to be wretched. Besides what objection can he have? Her beauty, her sweetness of disposition, her virtue, her connections——"

"Ah! stop," cried O'Halloran, "there lies the obstacle. *Her connections.* Will the powerful, the rich, the constitutional, the loyal family of the Barrymores degrade itself by an alliance with a traitor, a rebel, a ringleader of rebels, a man scarcely escaped from the gallows! No, sir; by strongly wishing for it you may force yourself to expect it; but cool reason tells me that it cannot be."

"If I have any knowledge of my father's character," replied Edward, "he has too liberal a mind to permit the errors of one individual to influence his estimation of another, however nearly they may be connected."

"You may think so, my young friend," said O'Halloran; "but you

relations will not look on her with your eyes. In the meantime, much as I should rejoice at your union with her, you must permit me to retract my assent, until it receives your father's; for unfortunate, poor, and persecuted as I am, I am too proud to permit my child to be taken into a family, the head of which may look on her as unworthy of such a situation."

"Wherever Ellen is known," said Edward, "she cannot be thought unworthy of any situation."

"But," returned O'Halloran, "her grandfather's unworthiness may be reflected on her."

"Oh, sir," said Edward in a tone of entreaty, "I shall procure the approbation of my family. You will surely then be satisfied."

"Not only satisfied but rejoiced," replied O'Halloran. "That they will yield to your wishes is my earnest prayer; but for the present, however, we must drop the subject."*

CHAPTER XX.

EDWARD, anxious for an interview with the Recluse, that very evening after parting with O'Halloran, visited the cell before M'Nelvin left it.

"Ah, sir!" cried the Recluse, as soon as he perceived him, "never did the arrival of a messenger yield more heartfelt delight than yours did to-day."

"My friends," said Edward, addressing them both, "you have had sad times here since I left you. The storm is now, however, abated; and I trust in God that our country will never witness such another, for Lord Camden is recalled, and the benign Cornwallis has by this time assumed the reins of government."

"Cornwallis! did you say?" exclaimed the Recluse, hastily.

"Yes, father, Lord Cornwallis is now Lord Lieutenant."

"Thank Heaven!" ejaculated the Recluse, "both for my country and for myself. The benevolent Cornwallis will restore my country to peace; and I shall be restored to my country. In a short time I shall no more tread my native soil as a disguised outlaw."

"Are you, then, acquainted with Lord Cornwallis?" asked Edward.

"Yes," said the Recluse. "I was his bosom friend during his campaigns in America; and, on one occasion, had the felicity to save his life, for which he has never since ceased to remember me with gratitude."

"Through his means might you not long since have procured a reversal of your sentence?" asked Edward.

"No, sir. On my return from America, he did apply for my pardon; but the influence of Sir Geoffrey Carebrow and others of his connections counteracted his exertions. I have never since permitted any application to be made. For some years I travelled on the continent; and having, at length, settled here and adopted this disguise, I became satisfied with my lot. As, however, late events have induced me to discover myself to a few friends, whose society I should be glad to enjoy without restraint, and one of my best friends has it now in his own power to remove the legal terrors that hang over me, I shall avail myself of the

opportunity which is thus providentially afforded me, to become again an acknowledged member of society."

Edward then gave them an account of the steps he took to procure the pardon of O'Halloran, adding that he had left Peg Dornan, the Recluse's messenger, absolutely crippled with fatigue.

"Poor creature!" ejaculated M'Nelvin.

"But she will be attended to," continued Edward; "and I make no doubt that such a constitution as hers will soon repair the damage it has sustained."

Edward now took leave of his friends, and returned to Mr Wilson's.

The next day, while O'Halloran was employed in attending to congratulatory messages and visits from his friends, his servants, assisted by a number of mechanics, commenced repairing the castle, that he might, with as little delay as possible, return to his ancient residence. The Governor of Carrickfergus, having the discretionary power over the fine to be inflicted on him, fixed it at three thousand pounds, for which Edward, who transacted this business unknown to O'Halloran, immediately gave a draught on his Dublin banker. He then, with Mr Wilson, became security to the amount of ten thousand pounds for their friend's future submission to the established government. When these two gentlemen went to Carrickfergus for the purpose of transacting these matters, which they did the day but one succeeding that on which Edward arrived with the pardon, they found the courts-martial still busied with the state trials. But these terminated before they left the place, by the arrival of a proclamation of a general amnesty issued by Lord Cornwallis, in favour of all, except a few individuals therein named, who should, within the term of six weeks from the date thereof, make their submission to the government. Of this merciful measure, all the prisoners in Carrickfergus instantly availed themselves, and were set at liberty.

Edward and Mr Wilson returned in company with a number of the prisoners who had been taken from the neighbourhood of Larne. On hearing their expressions of sorrow for the rash step they had taken, and their protestations of gratitude to the new viceroy for his clemency, he was forcibly struck with this proof of the advantage of conciliation over coercion in securing the tranquillity of a country. Here he saw men whom Camden's oppressive policy had rendered bitter enemies to the government, now, in consequence of Cornwallis's clemency, manifesting by every expression of sincerity, their resolution to live and die its friends and supporters.

Full of these reflections, and cheered with prospects of peace and prosperity which, under the auspices of the new viceroy, he perceived again to be dawning on his afflicted country, he approached the house of his companion, as yet the temporary residence of his Ellen, with light and joyous spirits. Here he had the pleasure to find the agreeable Miss Agnew, for whom he had contracted a sincere friendship. This young lady ran forward to him with an air of great liveliness; exclaiming, "Welcome, Mr Middleton!—O, I forgot, Mr Barrymore. But, indeed, I am so glad to see you that I cannot help blundering."

"My fair friend!" replied Edward unthinkingly, "either of the names will be agreeable to me that shall be most acceptable to you."

"Upon my word," she cried, "very gallant; a fair proposal, all at

once, before one has time to bless one's self. But what, my tender Damon, if I accept neither of these names."

"I must then bear the misfortune with as much fortitude as I may," returned Edward, perceiving the turn she had gaily given to his expression.

"Well, then, prepare to exert it," said she, "for the old Scotch name of Agnew sounds so well to my ears, that I am determined to change it for no other: but if I had to bear the awkward one of O'Halloran, I would soon adopt one of yours in its stead."

"I love my own country too well," observed Ellen, to whom the last remark had been slyly directed, "to prefer either a Scotch or an English name to one of true Irish growth—but Mr Barrymore," she continued, turning to Edward, "what news have you brought from Carrickfergus?"

"I have brought good news," he replied. "The state prisoners are all discharged, in consequence of a general amnesty proclaimed by the new Lord Lieutenant. Mr Wilson and I returned in company with some of those belonging to this neighbourhood."

"Heaven be praised! we shall yet see happy times," exclaimed Ellen.

"This is indeed pleasing intelligence," said Mrs Brown, who had entered the room as Edward was relating it. "Mr Barrymore, you are always the bearer of good news."

"Are you a mere man, or a magician?" asked Miss Agnew, looking him archly in the face.

"Why, mad-cap! such an absurd question!" demanded Mrs Brown.

"Let the gentleman answer first," said Miss Agnew.

"I can scarcely tell," he answered; "but I believe I am *enchanted* here."

They were now summoned to dinner. Several gentlemen of the neighbourhood were of the party, and among others, their friend M'Claverty. As soon as this gentleman perceived Edward, he appeared somewhat startled.

"Sir," said he approaching him, I think I have seen you before."

"Yes," replied Edward, "you were then on an important duty."

"I remember having examined you rather roughly," returned M'Claverty."

"That is nothing," said Edward. "Your duty required you to examine me. I was a stranger, and you were in pursuit of the perpetrators of a crime, of which, for aught you knew, I might have been guilty."

"Well, I hope," returned the magistrate, "that we shall be good friends on further acquaintance."

After a hospitable dinner, which like every other dinner given by people of fortune, displayed all the luxuries of the season, the cloth was withdrawn; and the ladies soon following it, the gentlemen addressed themselves, like true Irishmen, to the conviviality of the social cup; and the time passed away in the enjoyment of much good humour and hilarity.

The principal gentlemen in the neighbourhood now gave a routine of dinners and balls in testimony of their satisfaction at O'Halloran's escape from the dangers in which he had been involved, and of their respect for the high character he had supported through the trying scene. Edward and Ellen were, of course, always invited to these parties, and

the easy urbanity, the respectful kindness, and cheerful politeness of the Northern Irish, made an indelible impression on Edward's mind in their favour.

The industry and zeal of the workmen employed at O'Halloran Castle soon repaired the damages it had sustained; and, in a few weeks, the family were reinstated in the Hall of their ancestors. It is the custom in that part of the country, when a family removes from one dwelling to another, to assemble a large party of its friends and neighbours to an entertainment, called "heating the house." By a man of O'Halloran's disposition, a custom of this kind could not be neglected; and as so many respectable people had of late shown him so much kindness, the party he invited was more than ordinarily numerous.

After the usual entertainments of dinner, dessert, tea, &c., the party, in the height of glee, mirth, and enjoyment, resorted to a large room, where flaming chandeliers gave an artificial day, and harps, violins, and flutes, poured an animating stream of lively sounds, to give motion to their flowing spirits in the buoyancy of the bounding dance. It was about an hour before this sprightly and exhilarating amusement commenced, that a messenger arrived with the following note to Edward, from Charles Martin:—

"Dear Barrymore—I have at length followed you. Excited by my ardent desire to see the peerless beauty, who could so completely subdue a heart which was impregnable to all the attacks of the Dublin fair, I eagerly embrace the first moment, in which I could, with propriety, undertake the journey. The day before I left the city, I waited on the Lord Lieutenant, with the letter you enclosed from the Recluse, who, I understand, is to be no longer a mendicant, but is to appear in society in his own proper character of Francis Hamilton, Esq., of Hamilton Hall, in the county of Tyrone. His excellency was much pleased to hear from him; and, without delay, not only granted his request, but wrote him a long letter, which, on finding I was about to take a Northern trip, he entrusted to my care.

"Your favourite, Peg Dornan, had a pretty smart fever, and was unable to walk for nearly a couple of weeks; but she was in a convalescent state when I left Dublin, and as she was getting very home-sick, I suppose she will, in imitation of your humble servant, speedily honour the Northern folks with her presence. Your father informed me that he would send her in the stage. Both he and your mother have been as attentive to her as you could desire.

"By means of Lord Camden, your father has become acquainted with your intercession for the Insurgent Chief. He is pleased enough with your conduct in that affair, only he thought you might have made him your confidant. But I told him you had not *time*; which settled the point.—I will give you no more city news till I see you. Indeed I should not have given you so much in this way, but having to send you a letter, I could not properly do so without putting something in it, and news answered the purpose as well as anything else. I shall only add that I am impatient to see the old chief with the fame of whose exploits the whole city rang for some days before I left it."

Edward instantly acquainted O'Halloran with his friend's arrival, and a messenger with an invitation to the Castle, being despatched for him, he arrived just as the party had finished the first set of country-dances.

Charles Martin was a lively young man of the middle height, rather slender, with dark hair, and a glowing complexion. Though inferior to Edward in manly proportions, he was on the whole an interesting youth, gifted with the easy, affable, and polished manners of a gentleman.

Edward was conversing with a group of ladies, consisting of Ellen, Miss Agnew, the two Misses Simpson, and a Miss Moore, who had just sat down from the dance, when Charles was announced.

Edward hastened to meet him; and taking him to his own chamber, Charles was speedily transformed, from a hardy traveller into a "gallant gay," ready to wait on the fair, and join in the mirthful revelry of the evening. Before they entered the brilliant scene of hilarity, joy, and beauty, he stopped Edward near the door, where unseen they had a full view of the whole party.

"Stay, Edward," said he, "I, for a moment, wish to view at a distance, a constellation of charms, the splendour of whose beams, if too suddenly approached, might dazzle and confound me."

"Right," said Edward. "Let me see if, among all the fair, you can single out she whom I hold fairest."

The young man's glance speedily traversed the whole room. At last, resting upon a group of ladies to the right, who were sitting in a kind of semicircle, "If your goddess be within those walls," said he, "yonder she is, surrounded by her attendant nymphs; the lady with the damask rose on her breast."

"It is," was the reply.

"I knew it," replied the other, "and do not wonder that you have been overcome. Indeed, did I not know how that lovely object has already disposed of her heart, I could not answer for the safety of my own. But who is the lady to the right of this high beauty? She who has just turned her face towards us?"

"She is the Miss Agnew I have so often mentioned," replied Edward. "She is the greatest coquette in the company; and when she is in the humour, a considerable quiz; but one always overflowing with kindness and good nature."

"By Heaven! Edward," exclaimed Charles, "you charm me. She is just such a one as I have vowed to love. Serious beauty is too sublime for me. But do introduce me to the Circean group."

"Check your rapture first," said Edward; and do not play the fool when we approach. Why, I believe your heart is already lost."

"It is lost," replied Martin, "past redemption already, unless you show me some fault in that lady; for I confess that I shall never see any myself. But, lead on. Give me the pleasure of an introduction. I hope to conduct myself so as not altogether to forfeit my claim to the possession of common sense."

They now advanced directly to the ladies. "Miss O'Halloran! this is my friend, Mr Martin," said Edward. Ellen rose, and with a smile extended her hand to him, saying, "You are welcome, sir, to this part of the country. I hope so long as you remain here you will find it agreeable to your taste." She resumed her seat; and Edward introduced him to Miss Agnew, who, without rising, made an assenting motion with her head, and said in a somewhat fluttered voice, that she joined in the welcome her friend had given him. A nod from each of the other ladies, as they were severally named, returned by a bow from Martin, concluded

the ceremony of the introduction. Martin was next made acquainted with the gentlemen, who, each of them, gave him a hearty Irishman's shake of the hand, in token of a cordial welcome to their society.

The company (to employ a usual phrase) enjoyed themselves to a late hour, and separated highly pleased with their entertainment, and congratulating themselves on having added one more happy evening to their lives.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE next morning, Edward and Charles Martin called on the Recluse with the Lord Lieutenant's letter. They found M'Nelvin with him; and both, especially the Recluse, seemed to be much dejected.

"My friend," said Edward, as he approached the latter, "I have taken the liberty of introducing into your habitation a friend, whom I believe you have never seen, but of whom you have often heard. This is the only son of your correspondent, Sir Philip Martin."

"I am happy to see your father's son," said the Recluse to Charles. "You bear a near resemblance to what he was before my misfortunes began. Ah! you recall those days to my recollection when your father and I were college classmates. But different, far different, has been the tenor of our lives. His has been smooth, calm, and unruffled; for he was never the victim of those fierce passions which have brought on my head the storms of misfortune."

"Your misfortunes, sir," replied Martin, "are, I believe, now at an end; and I hope that my father and you have, in the evening of your lives, a long period of tranquillity and happiness before you."

"My friends," observed the Recluse, "I will never distrust the kindness of Providence. But you will pardon my present seriousness, when I inform you that I have just received news of the death, through drunkenness, of my only brother, Sir John Hamilton."

"What," cried Martin, "is your brother, Sir John, dead? Then permit me, Sir Francis Hamilton, to address you by your proper title. You are now a free man. I hold the document in my hand which absolves you from the effects of your unfortunate duel, and restores you to society. May you long enjoy your freedom, friends, and property!"

M'Nelvin's eyes sparkled at this intelligence. "God Almighty be praised for this addition to his other signal mercies!" he ejaculated, while Sir Francis hastily glanced at the signature of the letter.

"I expected this," said he, "from his excellency's friendship."

"I sincerely congratulate you," said Edward. "This is a turn of Providence from which, I trust, will proceed many years of happiness to us all."

"But my poor brother!" said Sir Francis, his mind still full of his catastrophe. "O! that he had died a less awful death!"

"Sir," said M'Nelvin, "in the midst of so many blessings, we ought not to repine, if the great Ruler of all does not send them unmixed."

"My friend," cried Sir Francis, catching M'Nelvin's hand, "your words to me have ever been wisdom. I shall endeavour to grieve no more. God has removed him in the way he thought best. His will be done!"

It was proposed that Sir Francis should, without delay, relinquish his disguise and resume his proper appearance and station in society. To this he agreed, adding that he had the means at hand, and should, in a few hours, meet them at the Castle, free, fearless, and undisguised.

Edward and Charles now left the cell, and with joyous hearts turned down the glen towards the shore; while M'Nelvin set off for Jemmy Hunter, in order to send him express to the sheriff of the county with information of the pardon his friend had received. Jemmy was soon on his journey; and that very evening returned with the following note from the sheriff, addressed to Sir Francis Hamilton:—

"DEAR SIR,—It is with great satisfaction that I acknowledge the receipt of yours of this morning, covering the commands of his excellency, the Lord Lieutenant, respecting you which, of course, it is my duty, as well as my pleasure, to obey. I shall make the agreeable communication known without delay to all the justices of the peace, jailers, and other officers, whom it concerns, so that you will be in no danger of personal molestation; and may appear in public whenever you think proper."

Edward and his friend having reached the beach, "Do you behold yon rock," said the former, "at the foot of the precipice to the right hand? It was from this summit I first beheld the mistress of my heart."

"And it was there too," observed Martin, "I understand that you were kept in durance for about four months, without once seeing the light of the sun."

"But," returned Edward, "it was there I was more than compensated for that privation, by the light of her lovely countenance visiting me, and showing me the way to liberty."

"You are a happy man, I acknowledge," said Martin. "O! that my sweet brunette were to render me such a service."

"Oh!" said Edward, "I think, after the warning I gave you, you have displayed but little prudence in venturing so near such danger."

"Ah! my friend," replied Martin, "I confess I am indeed caught. But I rejoice at it. If I am a captive I have, at least, the grace to be content with my chains."

"Yours is the superlative of love, I admit," said Edward. "I could wish we had the proof of its sincerity. But shall we explore the interior of the rock?"

"Yes," replied his friend; "I am full of curiosity to view that nest, in which so many ill-formed projects of rebellion have been hatched—"

"Not so fast," interrupted Edward. "I see our two enchantresses yonder. It will, methinks, be pleasanter to join them. On some other occasion we may visit the curiosities of this rock."

As they walked towards the ladies, Martin observed, "Since you have the key to my feelings, Edward, you cannot but know that I am unhappy; for I perceived that my little sly tempter looked rather askance on me last night."

"Have courage," said Edward; "you must have your day of trial as well as others. I underwent a long, heart-burning season of suspense."

They had now advanced within hearing of the ladies. After the first salutation, "If it will not be intrusion," said Edward, "we should wish to share the pleasure of your ramble."

"We do not intend going far," said Ellen. "We were just about returning when we saw you approach."

"Could we prevail on you to extend your walk," said Martin, looking timidly at Miss Agnew, "we should be much gratified."

A pause ensued, each lady expecting the other to reply. At length Ellen said, "If our company could indeed be of any service to you, gentlemen, we should cheerfully afford it."

"I assure you, ladies," replied Edward, "there can be no species of recreation which we would prefer to your company."

"Nor," added Martin, fervently, "would we exchange that company for any other under the sun."

"You Dublin gentlemen," said Miss Agnew, "have a bold knack at complimenting. Is such language frequent in your city?"

"I protest, Miss Agnew," said Martin, with simplicity, "I only speak what I feel to be true."

"Ah! young man," she returned, "you are now fallen from the sublime. I should like you to take another flight towards the sun—but no, the clouds will be high enough; for I should not wish you to be overcome with fatigue, if you are to be our companion when you descend."

"I am, indeed, too much overpowered by my present feelings to venture on any flight," replied Martin.

"Our presence is perhaps oppressive to you," said she. "We had better, therefore, separate," So saying, she affected to turn away from him, but with a smile of such sweet good nature as threw him totally off his guard.

"Oh! no, Miss Agnew," he exclaimed, "do not leave me until I lay my heart open before you."

"Lay your heart open before me! What a sight it would be!" she exclaimed. "Why, this must be another of your Dublin customs."

During this conversation, Edward and Ellen had proceeded some distance in advance of their friends, so that Martin perceived that he had an opportunity of expressing himself more freely and explicitly on the subject of his new-born love.

"I shall now speak plainly to you, my lovely banterer," said he. "The language of feeling and of love is everywhere the same. Ah! have you not perceived, from the confusion of my eyes, the agitation of my manner, that you have become too interesting to me, too essential to my happiness?—"

"Sir," said she, interrupting him, "this is strange discourse;—but we must follow our companions."

"Ah! let us imitate them too," said he, "by loving each other."

"They know each other better than we do," she replied, "and are consequently more excusable in yielding to the impulse of mutual affection with which their virtues have inspired them." While speaking thus, she hastened so rapidly forward, that they had nearly overtaken their companions, before he had time to ask, "When I am better known may I hope?"

"Perhaps so," was the only reply he received; but it was accompanied with a look that gave pleasure to his heart.

"Ellen, conscious that the state of her feelings was too well known to permit an overstrained reserve to appear natural, had, without hesita-

tion, accepted her lover's arm as they walked forward. Her gentle pressure communicated a thrill of delight to his whole frame, and he could not help exclaiming—"Ah! life of my heart! when shall I have a legal and exclusive claim to call thee my own, and to support thee thus in our walks, careless of observation, in the face of the world?"

"In that respect, I am not at my own disposal," she replied. "My father must act for me, or rather, his wisdom must show me how to act; but my father dares not now act openly; and I should very much question the propriety of giving away my hand while he lives, unless he appeared publicly on the occasion to sanction the deed."

"And publicly he will appear," replied her lover. "His danger is over, and his disguise will be thrown off this very day. The new viceroy is his friend, and has reversed his outlawry."

"Oh, Edward, do you indeed speak the truth?" she exclaimed. "But why do I doubt? This consummates the blessings which Heaven has so graciously, so abundantly showered on us of late. Lead me to my father, that, in his presence, I may thank my God."

Miss Agnew, who had heard her last expression, was astonished at her fervency; but, on learning the cause, she warmly joined in her thanksgiving.

Edward now informed Ellen that he expected her father had, by this time, thrown aside for ever his disguise, and that, in his own proper person, he would very soon appear at the castle to confirm the intelligence with his own lips. "Even at this moment he may be there," said he, "anxiously waiting to gladden the heart of his daughter with the certainty of his safety."

As the party approached the castle, they were overtaken by M'Nelvin, in company with a stranger of genteel appearance, who seemed somewhat beyond the middle age of life. He advanced towards them with a firm step and an air of courtesy, with a smile playing on his countenance, while M'Nelvin introduced him to them by the name of Sir Francis Hamilton.

Ellen startled, supposing that it might be her uncle, of whose death she had not been informed. "Sir John Hamilton, I rather suppose," said she.

"No; I have made no mistake. Sir Francis is his name," returned the poet.

"Yes, my daughter," exclaimed Sir Francis, "and I am thy father, the old Recluse, who has for six years been content to live as a hermit, because you were near him. He saw you all he wished you to be, and he was happy, although covered with the garb of poverty."

"You are indeed my father!" cried she. "That you are now safe, thank Heaven; but how have you become Sir Francis Hamilton? Has the Lord Lieutenant also given you a title?"

"No, my daughter. I have my title by inheritance. My brother, your uncle, is dead."

"Dead!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," replied her father. "He was a kind relative; and I cannot but feel much for his fate, it was so unexpected."

They soon arrived at the castle, where O'Halloran and his sister, being informed of the revolution in the affairs of the Recluse, partook of the general thankfulness; and the whole party enjoyed several days of higher felicity than usually falls to the lot of mortals.

CHAPTER XXII.

A FEW evenings after the foregoing incidents, Edward expressed a desire to view the celebrated cliffs called the Gabbon Heughs, being the only part of the Antrim coast which he had not formerly visited. The young ladies, Martin and O'Halloran, agreed to accompany him; and it was settled that they should set out after breakfast the next morning.

The weather was as favourable as they could wish; and, at the time they left the shore, the sun had dispelled every cloud, and was ascending towards his meridian altitude in unveiled majesty. The water was smooth and glossy, for there had been no high winds for several days. A moderate and favourable breeze sprung up from the north-west, and filling their sails, soon blew them from the land. In about twenty minutes they were opposite the mouth of Larne harbour, and perceived the ruins of Old Fleet Castle, about two miles distant, standing on the narrow stripe of land called the Curran, which projects from the bottom of the valley in which Larne is situated, into the harbour, which expands southward into a large lake, extending upwards of five miles, between the mainland and the peninsula of Magee. Our party perceived the bosom of this lake to be studded with merchant vessels of various sizes, while numerous yachts, barges, and fishing boats, plied in the strait between the Curran and the peninsula. They soon, however, doubled one of the points of the latter, and lost sight of this animating scene.

On reaching Isle Muck, it was determined to land there, to take some refreshment, and give the ladies an opportunity of recovering from the effects of the motion of the boat. The surface of this islet consists of a green sward of about three acres in extent. It is uninhabited by man, but commonly contains a flock of sheep, and constantly a multitude of rabbits. Our party, after partaking of a cold dinner, materials for which they had taken care to bring with them, spent some time in rambling over the islet, and viewing from different points the magnificent and picturesque scenery of land, and water, and rocks, and ships, and castles, and cottages, that at various distances surrounded them. They at length seated themselves on a hillock, to enjoy the sweets of song and music before they departed.

The singing was finished, and the company preparing to depart, when two men on horseback were perceived galloping with great speed along the beach of the peninsula, opposite the islet. In a few seconds, a body of ten or twelve countrymen, in pursuit of them, also appeared, who, on seeing our party, drew back, but not until they had fired some shots at the fugitives, one of which brought the foremost horseman to the ground. Our party had brought some fowling pieces with them. O'Halloran, Sir Francis, Edward, and Martin, each seized one, and ran immediately to the boat. In a few minutes they were on the opposite shore, and, with the aid of their attendants, had rescued the wounded man and his companions from their assailants. But what was their astonishment to find the fallen fugitive no other than the notorious Sir Geoffrey Carebrow? Compassion predominated over resentment in their bosoms, and, without hesitation, they instantly placed him in their boat, and, at the earnest entreaty of his attendant, the infamous Berwick, who represented

that he had no other mode of escaping from his pursuers, they received him also on board.

On the voyage back, O'Halloran asked Berwick (Sir Geoffrey himself was unfit for conversation) how they had been exposed to this attack.

"Here is a letter," replied Berwick, "which will explain that matter."

O'Halloran at once declared the hand-writing to be that of his old associate M'Cauley. He read it aloud as follows:—

"Sir Geoffrey Carebrow is informed by the writer of this, who wishes to share with him the reward offered for the heads of M'Cauley, Darragh, Archer, Kelly, and some others of the proscribed rebels, that if he will meet him at the uninhabited house near Isle Muck, to-morrow afternoon, the writer will go with him and point out a cave amidst the cliffs of the Gabbons, where they are secreted. This cave is accessible only by a very intricate path, which will be discovered to Sir Geoffrey. He may bring his servant Berwick with him, but must bring no military, lest alarm should be excited. The writer not wishing to be known, if military be brought, or any other servant than Berwick, whom he thinks trustworthy, he will not appear."

"Notwithstanding this caution," said Berwick, "my master brought fifty soldiers with him; but left them about half a mile from the place of meeting, and ordered me to accompany him there. The place is just behind that hill. On our way, after leaving the soldiers, I hinted to my master that there might be treachery in the affair. This seemed to alarm him, but he persisted in going forward, saying that the rebels were now too much frightened to do any more mischief. Being well mounted, we soon arrived in sight of the 'Old Ruins,' where we were to meet our unknown confederate, when perceiving the muzzles of two guns projecting out of one of the broken windows, my master's fear overcame his resolution, and we turned round to fly; but our flight towards the military was intercepted by a number of armed men, who were advancing on us. We had, therefore, nothing for it, but to take the road to the beach, which we did in such terror that we scarcely knew whither we fled, and should undoubtedly have fallen into their hands had not your appearance checked their approach."

As Sir Geoffrey seemed to be in great torture, our party hastened homeward with all the sail their boat could carry, in order as soon as possible to procure for him more comfortable accommodation and surgical assistance. Sir Geoffrey becoming very faint, they gave him some wine, and laid him on the bottom of the boat, in as comfortable a position as their circumstances would permit. His groans and ejaculations, indicating great torment both of mind and body, made a strong and melancholy impression on all present, especially the ladies. Cheerfulness, joy, and mirth vanished, and anxiety, gloom, and compassion occupied their places.

In the mind of Ellen, as she saw her dreaded persecutor, the arch-enemy of her peace, and the perjured betrayer of her grandfather's life, lying before her in all the agonies of mental despair and bodily pain, a suppliant for the compassion of those who had suffered so much from his wickedness, a mingled sensation of horror and pity arose, accompanied with an awful impression of the power of Providence, in frustrating the machinations of the wicked, and inflicting a just retribution for their crimes. Her feelings on this subject became so intense, that she almost

fainted as she leaned on the breast of her father; but tears, the holy tears of heartfelt compassion, came to her relief.

"Why do you weep, my child?" asked her father.

"Ah! father," she replied, in a low tone, "I have been overcome by reflecting on that signal example now before us, of the certainty of vice meeting with punishment. That man's great wealth and influence seemed to place his crimes beyond the reach of human power to punish; but a mightier power, one that can be neither eluded nor withstood, has taken up the sword of justice."

"Be comforted, my daughter," said Sir Francis, in a soothing manner. "This sight must indeed be appalling to you. But remember that if God punishes severely here, it is for gracious purposes hereafter."

Sir Geoffrey was immediately, on their landing, conveyed to that castle which he had been so lately active in damaging, and the generous hospitality of which he was now thankful to accept. Messages, at the same time, were despatched to request the attendance of Doctor Ferral and Mr M'Claverty. It was thought desirable that the latter should be made acquainted with the circumstances of the case, lest the government, or Sir Geoffrey's friends, might imbibe any misapprehension on the subject. The doctor attended immediately; and, on examining the wound, unequivocally declared that it would be mortal. When informed of his situation, Sir Geoffrey became greatly dismayed, and overcome with the dread of death. When the first shock of his terror somewhat subsided, the propriety of sending for a notary and a clergyman was suggested to him. He at first opposed this, but musing for a few minutes, during an interval of ease which medicine now procured for him, he ejaculated, "Yes, it must be so! My days are finished —Send for the Rev. Mr. Nichols, and for any notary you think proper; but let them come soon. In the meantime, request Miss O'Halloran to speak with me. A dying man cannot harm her; I wish her grandfather also to be present."

With trembling steps Ellen approached the bedside, supported by O'Halloran.

"This is kind in you," said Sir Geoffrey. "I have asked you here to request forgiveness from you both for the injuries I intended you. After which, I shall, with an easier mind, solicit the forgiveness of Heaven."

They both assured him that they forgave him with all their hearts.

"Do you, fair lady?" said he—"You whom I loved more intensely than ever I did any of thy sex; whom I so severely, so cruelly treated; do you really say so? or is it only a fond illusion of my mind?"

"I do really say so," replied Ellen; "I do indeed sincerely forgive you, and may Heaven forgive you also!"

"And you pray for me, too," said he. "O! then, I may indeed hope; for Heaven will surely hear the petition of innocence and virtue like thine." Then turning to O'Halloran, he said, "Much injured man, dare I hope that you also will pray for your enemy!"

"Yes," replied O'Halloran. "Unfortunate man, fervently do I pray, that the Almighty will grant you repentance, and pardon for all your crimes."

"And art thou he," exclaimed the conscience-stricken criminal, "to effect whose destruction I did not, in the height of my vengeful feelings, scruple to sin against my soul? Ah! that lies heavy on me."

"For that, too," said O'Halloran, "I hope you will be forgiven."

"God bless you," cried the penitent, "and hear your prayers in my behalf. And oh! may you never feel the pangs of conscience which I now feel."

He here convulsively covered his head, as if to conceal from his view something too dreadful to behold. Ellen could endure the scene no longer; for she had never conceived of anything so appalling as the horrible contortions of despair that disfigured Sir Geoffrey's countenance, and the wild flashing terror that gleamed from his eyes. She was therefore obliged to withdraw from such a distressing spectacle of human misery.

Prompt to the calls of duty, the Rev. Mr Nichols soon arrived; and never had a sinner more need of the consolations of the most merciful of all religions, than the despairing object to whom they were now administered. "No matter how great your crimes may be," said the holy man, when he found Sir Geoffrey had become sufficiently calm to listen to him, "an infinite propitiation has been made for human guilt. Put your trust in the great Redeemer, who died to ransom such as you from the effects of their transgressions. He who could pardon the malefactor on the cross is the same to-day, in power and in purpose, that He was then. Do not think that He died and suffered in vain, or that there can be any crime too great to be propitiated by such a sacrifice. He who pardoned the guilt of the royal adulterer and murderer, He who cleansed away the abominations of Manasseh, and forgave the cruelty of the persecuting Saul, can blot out your iniquities; and no one who sincerely sought for His redemption ever sought in vain; for He is long-suffering and full of kindness towards His creatures, and He has expressly said that, in the event of their repentance, although their sins be as scarlet, He will make them white as wool."

After this encouraging exhortation, followed by a fervent and animated address to the throne of divine mercy, the patient's mind became considerably composed, and on the arrival of the notary, he was able to go through the task of arranging his temporal affairs. This being accomplished, he desired to see O'Halloran; and taking from his pocket a key, he presented it to him, together with a newly-written paper.

"This key," said he, "opens a small set of ebony drawers, which you will find on a shelf on the south-eastern angle of my library; and this paper is a deed of gift of these drawers and all that they contain, with the exception of three certificates of money I possess in the national funds, which are to be disposed of as mentioned in my will. Everything else contained in these drawers, of value or not of value, is bequeathed to you. This deed I now make over to you in the presence of this notary. In the drawers there are testimonies of crimes I have committed, of which I hope, through the merits and sufferings of my Redeemer, to obtain eternal forgiveness; but the promulgation of which, while it would do the world no good, would uselessly bring ruin on the reputation, and embitter the lives of several individuals, who may have yet long to live."

O'Halloran assured him that he would cheerfully take charge of these things, and endeavour to fulfil his intentions, as far as lay in his power, concerning them, and concerning all other matters that might be entrusted to his care. The patient was then left quiet, and the anguish of both his mind and body being greatly relieved, he fell into a slumber,

which, although an uneasy one, continued till near the morning. When M'Claverty arrived he was awake, and considerably distressed from a recurrence of his bodily pain.

"In the name of Heaven!" exclaimed M'Claverty, on entering, and seeing the ghastly countenance of Sir Geoffrey, "how has this happened?"

"My evil career has been cut short," replied Sir Geoffrey. "I was shot at yesterday by a parcel of men, I believe some of the outlawed rebels, whose place of concealment I was endeavouring to discover."

"Shall I write this down?" asked the magistrate, "as your declaration of the means by which you came by the accident?"

"You may, and I will sign it," was the reply. This being done, he again fell into a slumber, which his pain did not permit to continue long; and he awoke with the hand of death upon him. He requested to see Ellen. When she entered his bed-chamber—

"Bless me, fair saint," said he, "and I shall die contented."

"May the God of heaven bless you," she replied, while the tears filled her eyes, "and take you to Himself."

"Amen!" he tried to utter, but the word died on his lips, and he sank back on the pillow in the agony of death. In a few minutes, Sir Geoffrey was no more.

After the funeral, the notary signified to Messrs O'Halloran, M'Claverty, and Wilson, that they were appointed, by the deceased, executors of his last testament, and requested their attendance the next day at Carebrow Hall, in order that the manner in which he had disposed of his property might be made known to all whom it concerned. They accordingly met, and the will was read in the presence of all the testators and relatives who could conveniently attend, of whom a married sister, and two female cousins, both married, were the nearest of kin.

His whole property, both real and personal, was bequeathed to his sister, with the exceptions mentioned in the will. These were seventy thousand pounds, bequeathed to Ellen, as an atonement for the persecutions his uncontrollable passion had obliged her to sustain; eight thousand pounds, to be equally divided between his two cousins; and the ebony drawers, with all they contained, excepting the certificates referred to, bequeathed to O'Halloran, who proceeded, according to the express direction of the will, to examine them in private. In the first drawer he opened, he found the certificates. In the second, he found the mortgage which he had given for sixty thousand pounds on his own estate. Immediately relocking the drawers, and returning to the company, he desired so much of the will to be a second time read, as would enable him clearly to understand the testator's meaning, in bequeathing to him the ebony drawers and their contents. This being done—

"Gentlemen," said he to the other executors, "I am so delicately situated, with respect to this legacy, that my judgment cannot at once decide how to act. I shall, however, be governed by your opinions. I borrowed, as is now publicly known, a large sum from the deceased, and gave him, for security, a mortgage on my landed property, which mortgage, to my astonishment, I find in one of these drawers."

"Then it is undoubtedly yours," observed M'Claverty. "This explains the mystery of his anxiety to give you the key of these drawers before he died, and perhaps, too, of his requisition that you should ex-

amine them privately, lest some interested person might displace that important paper."

"I am not clear on that point," returned O'Halloran. "He may have forgot that this instrument was there when he dictated the will."

"Gentlemen," interrupted the notary, "with your permission, I can at once decide this controversy. When writing that part of the will, the deceased declared to me that his intention was to give up to Mr O'Halloran the incumbrance that he held on his property."

"Since that is the case," said O'Halloran, "I believe I need not scruple to avail myself of this unexpected kindness of the deceased, who had an undoubted right to dispose of this part of his property as he pleased."

"Upon my word," exclaimed M'Claverty, "you seem as much afraid of touching what is decidedly your own, as if you were committing theft. But I wish you joy of your good fortune; and on account of this business I shall, notwithstanding all his faults, respect the testator's memory as long as I live."

The government certificates being now produced, each of the female cousins received that appropriated to her; and, at the desire of his co-executors, O'Halloran placed that bequeathed to Ellen in his pocket-book, and, in company with Mr Wilson, returned home on horseback.

That evening, after tea, Mrs Brown had left the room on some domestic business, and Martin had accompanied Miss Agnew on a ramble into the fields. Edward and Ellen were therefore left to the unobserved and delicious enjoyment of their own society. They had been for some time conversing on late events, and were now building delightful "castles in the air," when O'Halloran entered.

When O'Halloran approached, "My love!" said he to Ellen, "since God has, I hope, removed to himself the man who lately so much disturbed your peace, I trust that any resentment you may ever have felt against him is buried in his grave; and that you harbour no wish injurious to his memory."

She looked stedfastly in his face, and repeated, "Harbour a wish injurious to his memory! No, my grandfather. My worst wish concerning him is that his soul may now be in paradise."

"For that sentiment, dear, forgiving girl, then," said he, "receive this," and he handed her the paper by which she became a government creditor, to the amount of seventy thousand pounds. "This shows, at least, that he wished to make some atonement for what he caused you to suffer. He has bequeathed you this."

She looked at the paper for several seconds, as if involved in some doubt concerning it. "And am I free to receive this legacy?" she asked.

"As perfectly free," he replied, "as if I had myself willed it to you on my death-bed."

Edward here started as if from a reverie. "Miss Hamilton," said he, "if your grandfather has no objection, I wish just now to speak with you a moment on this subject by ourselves."

"With all my heart," said O'Halloran; "but remember that it is not in the power of Sir Geoffrey's executors to make any other disposal of this property."

"I shall counsel her to accept it," replied Edward; and O'Halloran immediately withdrew.

"As I trust," said the young lover, to the mistress of his heart, when they were alone, "that your fortune and mine will soon be the same, I hope that it will not be considered officiousness in me to suggest my wishes respecting your disposal of this legacy. My fortune does not require any addition; but your grandfather is involved in a large debt to the estate of this very Sir Geoffrey, and it would almost appear that he had left you this to enable you to relieve from incumbrance a man whom he had so seriously injured."

"It is right, Edward," she replied. "How kind you are to advise me thus! My grandfather's debts shall be discharged immediately out of this sum. Let us hasten to him, for I shall not be easy until it be done."

O'Halloran had gone to his library. They followed him, Ellen still holding the paper in her hand. "What," said he, as he saw them approaching, "have you decided already? I see you are a persuasive adviser, Mr Barrymore."

"Grandfather!" said Ellen, running to him, and catching him by the hand, "you must grant me one request."

"Be assured, my dear," he returned, "that I shall grant you anything in reason."

"In reason or out of reason," she observed, "you must grant me this one."

"That is very exacting, Ellen; but what would you have, my child?"

"I would have you to receive this," said she, presenting him the government note.

"If it be to manage it for you, I shall receive it with pleasure," he replied.

"No," said she, "manage it for yourself. I do not wish Sir Geoffrey's successors to have any claim upon you."

"They have no claim upon me," he replied. "But, if they had, do you think that I would rob you to satisfy them? No, I would rather sell my last acre."

"Are you not largely indebted to Sir Geoffrey's heirs?" she asked.

"I do not owe them a fraction, my child" he answered. "But I cannot, indeed, I cannot bear this." (Here tears of fondness and joy swelled in his eyes.) "Your affection makes your old grandfather weep like a babe. Come to my arms, and let me embrace the daughter, the delight of my old age." So saying, he impressed a parental kiss on her glowing cheek, and sat down for a few seconds to recover from his agitation; then, again rising, "Edward—Ellen!" said he, catching a hand of each, and joining them, "may your children, and your children's children, love you with a love like this, and make your hoary age as happy as you now make mine!"

"Thank you, father, for this inestimable gift," cried Edward; and, forgetting himself in the delirium of the moment, "Permit me to embrace such excellence," said he to Ellen, and he also impressed a burning kiss on her cheek ere she was aware. In an instant she burst from his embrace, and ran to conceal her confusion in an antechamber.

"Edward immediately felt that he had acted rudely, and heartily condemning himself, he begged O'Halloran to intercede for his pardon.

"Ah!" said O'Halloran, "I confess you are rather vehement. But be at ease, I shall try to procure your forgiveness."

He then sought Ellen, and leading her back into Edward's presence—"You must forgive this rash youth," said he, "for I set him the example; and he only forgot that he had not the weight of nearly threescore years on his head to entitle him to such privileges."

"Pardon me, Miss Hamilton!" said Edward, imploringly. "By Heavens! you know I would rather cut off my right hand than offer you an intentional insult."

"Well, sir," said she, "to please my grandfather I will overlook this piece of folly. But you must remember never to treat me again with such disrespect."

"Never, never, my beloved!" he exclaimed, as he fervently kissed the hand she held out to him in token of reconciliation.

"Well!" said O'Halloran, seating himself on a chair, and laughing heartily at them—"what fools you are! what a love scene you have acted in the presence of an old man! It will be well for you if I do not discover the whole to Miss Agnew. She would undoubtedly divert young Martin with it for a month to come."

They both begged that he would not mention the incident, it was so ridiculous, and was now no more to be thought of by themselves. He cautioned them to keep their own secret, and he should certainly not betray them.

"But," said Ellen, wishing to turn the conversation into another channel, "you refuse my offer; may I ask the reason?"

"Because, my child," said O'Halloran, "I do not need it. I have a clear income of five thousand a year, which is more than enough for an old widower of fifty-nine, who has no longer any ambition to become conspicuous in the world."

"How is this, grandfather?" said she; "pardon my inquiry, for you know your welfare is necessary to mine."

"I know it, my daughter, and shall satisfy you." He then produced the mortgage, and informed them that he also was a legatee of Sir Geoffrey, at least to the amount mentioned in that instrument, but to how much more he did not himself know, as he had not yet examined all the ebony drawers."

"Then, sir," said she, "I suppose I must keep my legacy."

That very evening one of O'Halloran's servants brought from the post-office a letter to Edward from his father, and one to Sir Francis Hamilton from the Lord Lieutenant. Edward's was as follows:

"MY SON,—A few days ago I received from you a very foolish letter, requesting me to consent to your marriage with a woman I never saw, nor, until that very moment, ever heard of. I took, of course, some pains to inquire concerning her, and her connections. The only person from whom I could obtain much information is your old mendicant protege, who praises her in a style that I cannot well understand; but from which I can gather that she is a great beauty. I presume, therefore, that, in the ardour of your admiration, you have endowed her with angelic qualities, for in the eyes of every love-sick young man, who has a handsome mistress, she cannot be aught else than an angel.

"But, sir, how does it happen that you could suppose your father as easily blinded as yourself on such a subject? or how could you imagine that bright eyes and a fine complexion could make up in my estimation for obscurity of birth, and rebellious connections; for I understand that

the lady in question is daughter to an outlaw, and granddaughter to a rebel; and a rebel, too, of the very worst stamp; one whose influence in the country has been wilfully perverted from preserving its tranquillity to promoting its destruction. How could the loyal, the virtuous, the patriotic Edward Barrymore, he of whose promising talents and acquirements his friends have been hitherto so proud, degrade himself and the family whose representative he is by such a connection?

"I speak nothing of the lady's want of fortune, although I am informed that her grandfather, on whom she totally depends, has mortgaged his property for more than it is worth, for the wicked purpose too of procuring supplies for the rebel armies. If ever the fomenter of a country's ruin deserved death, this jacobinical old man, according to all accounts, did so. But your boyish and imprudent attachment for a handsome face interfered and snatched him from justice. When I first heard of that affair, I was silly enough to approve of your conduct, as I ascribed it to a generous impulse of humanity and gratitude for one who had, as it is reported, saved your life. But I now see that a foolish passion for a pretty girl was at the bottom of your apparent benevolence. What your uncle will say on this subject I cannot tell, for I have not yet communicated it to him. But as he scarcely approved of your interference in behalf of the old rebel, I presume he will utterly disapprove of your intention to contaminate the purity of your family blood, by marrying the granddaughter.—But enough on this subject.

"Ah! sir, is it a time for any of the house of Barrymore to bask indolently in the rays of beauty, or in the enjoyment of female blandishments, when the fabric of society is tottering to its very foundations? When your country is assailed at once by domestic traitors and foreign invaders, ought you, in the vigour of youth and activity, to desert her cause, and lie supinely sunk under the fascinations of love and luxury?

"I call on you, I order you to throw off your disgraceful chains, and fly to the standard of your king and country. The French have landed, in what force it is not exactly known, on the Connaught coast. But it is certain that they will form a rallying point for insurrection. It is said that the peasantry have already swelled their ranks to a countless multitude. I take the field to-morrow, as commander of a regiment of cavalry, in which I have preserved for you the rank of a captain. Cornwallis has placed himself at the head of the troops: and I trust that we shall all exhibit a zeal and soldierlike conduct worthy of our cause, and of such a renowned commander.

"I shall expect you to join us, wherever we may be encamped, in a week at furthest from this date; and, if you do your duty on this occasion, as becomes you, your late errors will be forgiven by your indulgent father,

"THOMAS BARRYMORE."

The Lord Lieutenant's letter required Sir Francis Hamilton's immediate attendance on the army.

Edward and Sir Francis made hasty preparations to set off, in obedience to these requisitions, the next morning.

Edward saw that, with respect to Ellen, his father had received some unfavourable impressions, but believing that, at their first interview, he could, by a simple statement of the truth, easily remove these, he did not

think proper to disclose to either her or her friends this part of the intelligence he had received.

Ellen was much agitated on parting with her lover. "You are going," said she, "into danger; I may never see you again. Oh! I thought—I presumptuously thought that all my misfortunes were at an end—but I may yet have the greatest that could befall me, to endure. And my father, too—to be torn from me. Oh! Heaven grant that I may not have just found him only to lose him for ever!"

"Dearest Ellen," replied her lover, "be comforted. This new disturbance, this daring invasion, will not be long able to withstand the power that shall be led to its suppression under the direction of such an able commander. Fear not but that we shall soon return safe and victorious."

"Go, then, my Edward, and, if my unceasing prayers prevail on Heaven to protect thee, thou shalt indeed return safe and uninjured."

"Then, my love," said he, "Heaven, I am assured, will hear thy prayers; and I shall have nothing to fear."

They now exchanged vows of lasting fidelity; and Ellen retired to seek sympathy from the friendship of Miss Agnew. But Miss Agnew was in almost as much need of a comforter as herself. She had just taken a tender farewell of Martin, who had resolved, in this alarming juncture, to volunteer his services to the government.

Sir Francis requested Jemmy Hunter to accompany him, as his attendant, to which he readily agreed, after a reluctant and weeping consent was obtained from his Peggy, to whom he gave a tender embrace at parting; and with a full and manly heart said, "May God keep you and the wean frae a' ill till I see you again!"

With her child (which was now about six weeks old) in her arms, she followed him to the door. "You were aye kind to me, Jemmy," said she, half-choked with grief; "but you are noo gaun in a lawfu' cause, and in guid company. May grace gae wi' ye!—an' may He keep you that can keep you, an' bring you safe back to your wife an' wean!" She then retired to offer up to Heaven, in simple but fervent language, the artless wishes of her soul for the husband of her affections, the father of her child.

As Jemmy rode to the castle to join the gentlemen, previous to their departure, he thought intensely of his Peggy. "Gude keep her for a guid creature, and the wee helpless wean—how it looked at me!" Here a few tears swelled in his eyes. "But I maunna be such a chicken as this," thought he, and he wiped them off with a courageous resolution that they should have no successors.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The French, under the command of General Humbert, an experienced and active officer of revolutionary origin, landed about the middle of August, to the number of between eleven and twelve hundred men, at Killala, in the west of the island. They brought with them a large quantity of arms and warlike stores of every description, for the supply of the multitude of insurgents, whom they expected immediately to join their standards; and, in some degree, they were not disappointed;

although the conciliatory measures so prudently adopted by the new administration prevented their hopes from being altogether realized.

Landing in a Catholic district, they were indeed joined by a considerable number of the more zealous of the lower orders of that persuasion; but they were denied the more efficient aid of the influential and wealthy portion of the community, who had universally embraced the terms of the late proclamation of indemnity and remained at peace.

The French, with their Irish auxiliaries, soon advanced upon Castlebar, the capital of Mayo, the county in which they landed, and there they briskly attacked and defeated General Lake, who commanded a small division of the royal troops. This success opened their way into the interior of the country, and, besides increasing the number of their insurgent allies, spread consternation among all ranks of the royalists throughout the kingdom.

Cornwallis, however, was soon on his march at the head of ten thousand men, in order to wrest its short lived triumph from the invading standard. He was about three days' march from the metropolis, when Edward Barrymore and his friends joined him. Sir Francis Hamilton received from the Lord Lieutenant all that cordial and friendly welcome which, from his knowledge of that nobleman's warmth of heart, he expected; and was immediately appointed to the office which he had been solicited to accept. Edward's father was so well pleased with his orders having been so promptly obeyed, that he received his son with much kindness.

"This is right, Edward," said he, taking him aside; "you will now have a more honourable employment than sighing at the feet of a woman."

"Ah! sir," replied Edward, "you do not know that woman, otherwise you would not speak so lightly of her."

"So you think, foolish boy. I see she has you still in her chains. But I shall not at present reproach you. I indeed admire your obedience and zeal on this occasion the more, that I perceive what they have cost you. But when you choose a wife, if you would please me, you must choose one well connected."

"Oh, father, this lady's connections are not properly known to you."

"I have heard of them."

"But permit me to say that you have heard misrepresentations."

"Was not her grandfather a rebel chief, condemned to the gallows."

"Yes, sir; but deservedly pardoned. He was always virtuous, humane, and honourable."

"Is her father not an outlaw for murder?"

"No, sir!"

"And what is he?"

"His name is Sir Francis Hamilton?"

"What! he who came here to-day with you, and whom his excellency esteems so much!"

"The same is Ellen Hamilton's father."

"Why, I was told that O'Halloran is her name, and that her grandfather, to save her from the disgrace of bearing that of a murderer, gave her his own."

"He gave it to her from affection, as he brought her up from her infancy, her father having had to fly the country."

"Is it true, then, that he was an outlaw?"

"Yes, but not for murder. His wife's honour was assailed by a villain. For her he fought, as, in similar circumstances, you would have done, and conquered."

"Well, my son, we shall speak more of this hereafter," he said, perceiving the Lord Lieutenant and Sir Francis Hamilton advancing towards them.

"Mr Barrymore," said his excellency, "permit me to become acquainted with your son, of whom my friend, Sir Francis Hamilton, whom I beg leave to introduce to you, speaks so highly." The introduction having taken place, the party accompanied Lord Cornwallis to his quarters.

They had scarcely sat down, when an express arrived with intelligence that the enemy had penetrated as far as Tuam, in the county of Galway, little more than a day's march distant, where they had chosen ground for an encampment, which they had commenced entrenching, as if they intended there to await an attack. Their number was not ascertained, but, including the French, it was supposed to be nearly twenty thousand.

Orders to move forward were immediately issued. The trumpets sounded, the drums beat to arms, and in a few minutes the army resumed its march.

The honourable Thomas Barrymore, at the head of a squadron of horse, led the van. His son had a station assigned him in the same corps, in order that he might be near his father.

That night brought them within ten miles of the enemy; and, at about nine o'clock the next morning, they perceived, about a mile distant, the insurrectionary banners in the vicinity of the tri-coloured flag, floating in the air on the opposite hill, which was covered with a countless multitude, who were evidently, however, with the exception of the French, destitute of everything like military discipline.

Humbert had indeed made every arrangement in his power, to repel the formidable attack which he knew he was about to sustain; and something like a regular division of his forces into four bodies appeared to have taken place. His own men were in the centre, where the ground was most accessible. Behind them, and on each side, large bodies of the Irish, covering almost the whole rising ground, were placed. The French artillery was stationed at intervals along the front of their line.

Between the two armies there was a low broken hedge, along which, on the side next the royal army, ran a small stream, but which, at this time, owing to a long season of dry weather, contained very little wat r. However much assured of victory, the military caution of Cornwallis would not permit him to make the attack until he had ascertained the most practicable spot for passing the obstruction with his cavalry.

For this purpose he despatched colonel Barrymore, with a party of about fifty horsemen, up the streamlet, while another trusty officer, with a similar party, went on the same errand in the opposite direction. Edward attended his father on his duty, and Jemmy Hunter who had, on his arrival at the camp, obtained permission to join the cavalry, was also of the party.

The detachment, which went down the stream soon found such a passage as their general wanted; and immediately returned. As the Barrymore detachment, therefore gained the brow of a small hill, about half a mile distant from where they had set out, they heard the royal trumpets

sounding; and immediately a heavy cannonade was commenced by the king's troops, reciprocated almost instantly by their opponents. Knowing by this that the object of their search was elsewhere discovered, they were about to return to their former station, when they observed a body of about a hundred and fifty insurgent horsemen descending the hill, leading from the extremity of the enemy's right, and approaching towards them at full speed. They immediately formed into a compact body, and riding briskly among the insurgents, whose very speed had deranged their order, if they had ever possessed any, in a few minutes put them to flight with considerable loss. They had scarcely pursued the fugitives to the bottom of the hill, when two men on horseback were perceived rushing furiously down in order to rally them. One of these men in particular displayed great energy. With a drawn sabre he endeavoured to arrest the progress of those who seemed resolved to fly past him, exclaiming, "Cowards! see what a handful of men you fly from! Turn, for Heaven's sake and fight. This day decides the fate of your country. Follow me; if ye are men, follow me!"

Only about thirty of the most resolute reined their horses and followed him, as foremost and almost alone he rushed on his opponents. The first and second of Barrymore's horsemen he met scarcely obstructed his flying speed. He gave each only a passing blow with his sabre, by which he clove them from their horses, as if he had struck twigs from their stems. Opposition seemed to give way before him; and, almost unobstructed, he directed his fearful course towards Colonel Barrymore.

Edward, alarmed for his father's safety, galloped forward to arrest the death-blow, which he saw aimed against him; but ere he could prevent it, that blow was given, and his father had fallen. With uncontrollable fury he rushed to meet his terrible antagonist, who perceived him, while he was yet some paces distant; and redashing his spurs into his horse, darted towards him.

The horses met with a dreadful momentum, and were both overthrown. But in an instant their riders had gained their feet. The same instant they recognised each other, and paused, as if surprise had for a moment paralyzed their strength.

Edward first exclaimed, "M'Cauley!" "Barrymore!" was the immediate reply.

That moment Edward heard a groan from his father as some person raised him from the ground. "Villain! die! you have killed my father," he shouted, flying with the force and agility of a lion on his antagonist, who, however, coolly parried the attack without returning it, crying out, at the same time,

"By the life of him you saved from the gallows! Barrymore, I will not hurt you, if you should slay me on the spot."

An instinctive feeling of reluctance to destroy a man thus voluntarily throwing himself in his power, occasioned Edward to desist from the attack. Another of the insurgents now rode forward, crying out "Slay him, M'Cauley! Down with the young traitor. Had you slain him when I advised you, at the Point Rock, you would not now have to fight him. But, by God! there's another traitor I'll smite to the earth."

He had that moment seen Jemmy Hunter, who was advancing to Edward's assistance. He hastened towards him, exclaiming, "Accursed villain! I owe you a deadly debt. Receive this!" But before he could

wield his weapon, Jemmy's sabre had fallen with well aimed and resistless force, on his neck, and his head hung half-severed from his body, as if a school-boy's wand had broken down the head of a thistle, and he immediately reeled from his horse.

"Darragh! you were owre lang o' gettin' this," cried Jemmy. "Had I gien ye't a twalmonth ago in M'Gorley's stable in Larne, ye would hae gane to your lang hame wi' fewer sins on your head."

"Is it you, traitor?" cried M'Cauley; "but you must pay for it;" and he aimed a fierce and sudden blow at Hunter. But the stroke was dexterously avoided, although it did not fall without mischief, for Hunter's horse received it in his neck, and tumbled to the ground. M'Cauley would have repeated the blow with fatal effect, had not Edward sprung forward, and struck the falling blade with such force that it almost forsook its owner's grasp.

"Desperate wretch," cried he, "will you commit another murder in my sight, and expect I will look tamely on it? Ah! hear you my father's groans! O Heaven! he has been slain by an assassin—a monster!"

"Assassin!" reiterated M'Cauley, assuming the countenance of a fiend—"By Heaven, that word has sealed thy doom. Away with it!" cried he, as if he was discharging some troublesome feeling that seemed tenaciously to harbour in his breast; "away—all regard for the preserver of O'Halloran is now fled."

So saying, he withdrew a step backwards, as if to come forward with a surer aim, and redoubled force. Edward met him with equal force, and, his father's groans still ringing in his ears, with a higher degree of rage than he had ever before felt. Fury flashed from the eyes of both, and when their weapons met the clash shook the air, the fiery sparks fell around them, and they both reeled with the concussion.

Edward was an expert and educated swordsman; and he now applied his science for his safety. A forward thrust by M'Cauley, who conceived that he had a fair opportunity for such a manœuvre, was so well observed and so dexterously turned aside that the weapon passed without doing injury, while Edward's was instantly buried in his antagonist's body, who fell, but uttered not a groan.

Edward immediately ran to his father, whom he found almost speechless. But on hearing his son's voice he faintly uttered, "Pursue the enemy."

A sense of public duty rushed on Edward's mind, and mounting the horse of a man whom he ordered to remain with his father to support him and keep his wound stanched, he galloped after his men, who had again discomfited the insurgent party, and were just commencing a new pursuit. Having followed them to the very verge of their camp, which was now getting fast into confusion, he withdrew them to the scene of his late action, in good order, no attempt being made by the enemy to follow them.

Indeed by this time the attention of the insurgents all over the hill was principally engaged in providing for their own safety. Cornwallis had ordered a large party of both horse and foot to march by the passage over the stream, that had been discovered as before mentioned, for the purpose of outflanking the enemy's left, while his powerful artillery continued to commit great havoc upon them in front. As soon as this de-

tachment reached its destination, and opened its fire, the insurgents on the whole of the left and rear of the French, fled in all directions, and were pursued with a too terrible slaughter by the cavalry.

General Humbert, seeing that it was in vain to resist longer, hoisted the white flag. The firing immediately ceased on both sides, and after a short negotiation, the French, having lost about one-third of their number, surrendered themselves prisoners of war. The insurgents to the right of the French now followed the example of those who had occupied the left; and in a short time there was no enemy to be seen on the field.

Being persuaded that the rebels were thoroughly dispersed, and that there was no danger of their rallying again to give any more disturbance, the viceroy, from motives of humanity, soon ordered the pursuit to cease, so that this complete and decisive victory, which terminated the disastrous insurrection of 1798, was achieved with far less bloodshed than from the numbers arrayed on both sides, previous to the engagement, could have been expected. This was undoubtedly owing to the judicious and humane plan which the viceroy took to disperse the insurgents, rather by intimidation than actual slaughter, in which he completely succeeded, as well as to his ordering the pursuit to be so soon relinquished. It was fortunate also that there were few such resolute and daring men among the Southern conspirators as M'Cauley, otherwise the resistance, and consequently the slaughter, would have been infinitely greater. That unfortunate man, on hearing of the landing of the French, had left his concealment at the Gabbons, and, in company with Darragh, and eight or nine more of the proscribed Northerns, joined the invaders on their march from Castlebar to Tuam. These men all met with their death in this engagement.

When Edward had obtained accommodation for his father in the house of a gentleman in the neighbourhood, and had left him under surgical care, he returned with Jemmy Hunter to where M'Cauley and Darragh lay, in order to ascertain their fate. The latter was dead. He had died almost instantly, his head, as has been already observed, having been nearly separated from his body. The former was still alive, but very much exhausted.

Edward proposed that he should be carried to a house, and receive the care of a surgeon; but to this he would not consent.

"Here," said he, "is the most honourable place for me to die, and I rejoice that my death has been occasioned by honourable hands. My life was rendered miserable, but my spirits were never depressed; nor was I ever so irresolute as to abandon my purpose for fear of an ignominious death, —and Providence has been kinder to me than I perhaps deserved. I have not always squared my actions by the rules of conduct or the notions of morality generally adopted by men. An instinctive perception—some might call it the impulse of feeling, but I have flattered myself that it was the dictate of conscience—generally directed me in my path, and pointed out what I should do. To neglect the inspirations of this instinct which I had made my guide, I considered as great a crime as to infringe the prohibitions of the Divine law; and the most questionable action of my life, the destruction of M'Bride, I considered as a positive duty, because it was suggested by this regulator of my conduct.

' Mr Barrymore, I die because I was an assassin, as you please to term it; for had you not enraged me by pronouncing a word which I considered an insult, I should not have fought you, and you would not have slain me; neither could you have done so to-day, had I been naturally of a more blood-thirsty disposition, for then, fifteen months ago, I should have taken the advice of the wretched man who lies there, and sent you unseen or unheard of, to the grave. But my inward monitor forbade me, and I dared not do it. And now, if I have really been such a pest to the world, such a monster of mischief to society, as my enemies have called me, by my own forbearance you have lived to avenge the world, and rid society of me.

"Hear, now, my last words; for I feel that I shall not be able to speak much longer. Let not my death cause you any regret, for to you it was no crime. Vexation for the fall of a beloved father prompted you to utter harsh expressions; these expressions occasioned my death, by causing me to draw upon you. But it is a death I rejoice in; the death of a Hampden, on the field of glory, in my country's cause, and by the hand of an honourable man. What can be a happier consummation? But, oh! farewell. Tell O'Halloran that I died blessing my country."

The last words were almost inaudible, and he expired in a few minutes after uttering them. When Edward beheld him dead, his heart smote him. "It is the first death that has ever been occasioned by my hand," he exclaimed, "and, oh! may heaven grant that neither duty nor accident may prevent it from being the last!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHEN Edward returned to his father, he was given to understand that the latter had not many hours to live.

"Oh, father!" cried he, catching his hand, and bathing it in tears, "how soon has it pleased God to take you from me! You have been to me a good father. You have ever been to me an example, a director and a friend. Ah! who can to me supply your place?"

"Edward," said his father, "grieve not thus. I must now repeat what I have often inculcated upon you. Bear misfortunes with the spirit of a man, and the resignation of a Christian. Show yourself, whether in prosperity or in adversity, worthy of the house of Barrymore. It is useless, it is unbecoming, to lament in this manner. And why should we lament for this result of the day? It ought to be esteemed a day of rejoicing, and not of grief. We have crushed a mighty rebellion; and ere I die, I have the satisfaction of knowing that the decisiveness of this day's victory has secured to my country and my children the blessings of just laws, and a well regulated government—a government equally removed from despotism and anarchy.

"These, my son, are blessings worth fighting for, worth dying for. Edward, if you inherit any of your father's principles and feelings, you will not, if fate requires it, regret to die for them. When you have children, I know you will not; for the power of transmitting such a legacy as our incomparably happy form of government, cannot be pur-

chased too dear. Ah! what would be my pangs on this death-bed, if I perceived the enemies of that truly free and rational government triumphant, and all its wise and venerable institutions in danger of being subverted by the demons of anarchy, bigotry, and massacre. But, thank God! in the midst of my country's madness, in the midst of her delirious attempts at self destruction, the weapon has been wrested from her hand; and although in the blind fury of her paroxysm, she has inflicted dreadful wounds on her welfare and prosperity, yet I trust, that the regenerating soundness of her constitution will soon repair her injuries, and restore her once more to vigour and happiness.

"Your mother and your sister will now look to you as their protector. I know that you will treat them with all the care and tenderness with which I have treated them Be to them in my stead,—be to your country in my stead."

"My father," cried Edward, "I shall, with all my soul, endeavour to be so. But who shall be to me in your stead?"

His father paused a few moments, and then replied. "My son, you have a heavenly Father; never, never forget that. But there is also one man on earth, to whom, if he will accept them, I will resign my rights over you. I hope he will be to you a parent such as I have been. I wish to see Sir Francis Hamilton."

That gentleman, in company with the Lord Lieutenant, was just approaching to inquire after his situation. When they entered his apartment, "My Lord," said he, "I congratulate you and the country on this day's victory. I hope it will terminate this unnatural rebellion."

"I hope so," replied the viceroy; "but we have purchased it dearly with your loss."

"My Lord, I am happy to die in such a manner, and in such a cause. My country will experience but little injury, for I shall leave here this young man, my only son, to fill my place; and to him, Sir Francis Hamilton," said he, looking at that gentleman, "I wish you to fill mine. I am no stranger to his ardent attachment to your daughter; and although I have never seen her, the circumstances of her being your child and his choice, are to me sufficient for wishing her to become his wife; and if you have no objection to receive him as your son-in-law, when I am no more, the reflection, that he has such a prospect of happiness before him, will contribute much to soothe my dying moments."

Sir Francis, grasping the hand of the patient, which was extended to him, replied,

"I am sorry that my Edward, for I will now call him mine, so soon, so suddenly loses such a father. With all my heart and soul I shall endeavour, however imperfectly, to supply the loss; for if I were to search the whole civilized world, I should not find a man whom my heart would prefer to him as a husband for my daughter."

"Then, Edward," said the Colonel, "give me your hand. May you soon be happy with the woman of your choice, and may Heaven bless you and her with every virtue that may entitle you to happiness."

Not many hours after this, Colonel Barrymore closed his eyes upon all earthly scenes. His body was carried to Dublin, and thence to Barrymount, the family seat, and there buried with his fathers, in the presence of a large concourse of real mourners.

His brother, the Earl, being now much advanced in life, for he was

upwards of fifteen years older than the Colonel, laid his death so much to heart, they having ever lived on the most affectionate footing, that, from being only infirm, he became diseased and soon felt such a change for the worse in his constitution, that he prognosticated that he was speedily approaching his last illness.

"And I am content that it should be so," said he to Edward's mother and sister (who now resided at Barrymount for the purpose of giving him their society), "for since my beloved brother has left this world, it is become to me a world of desolation. Oh! I wish, fervently wish to follow him to that world of happiness which he now inhabits, and where, when we once meet, we shall never part."

In the meantime, Edward's heart panted to visit the North. But he could not with propriety leave his uncle in his present precarious situation. He, however, in almost daily letters, poured forth the ardour of his soul to his beloved, and received from her regular replies, which formed his only consolation during his present afflictions.

One day his uncle called him to his bed-side. "Edward," said he, "on you will soon devolve the duty of supporting in the world, the name, rank, and respectability of our family, which, I am proud to say, has never yet been tarnished by a mean or an unprincipled act. There is nothing in the world I value so highly as this family reputation. I received it pure from my ancestors, and neither your father nor I have, thank God! done anything to sully it. To you it shall soon be committed a sacred trust. You will guard it, therefore, with solicitude, and transmit it to your posterity as pure as you found it; and may Heaven grant you a virtuous offspring to know its value, and perpetuate its purity!

"There is one thing in which, if you can indulge me, you will afford me great gratification. I understand that your father, on his death-bed, gave his assent to your marriage with a lady in the county of Antrim, to whom you are attached. I should be glad before I die to see that lady whose conduct is to have such influence on the future reputation of the name of Barrymore; for, on the mother of a family, the transmission of its character depends more than on any other individual. You may deem such a desire as this whimsical, and, perhaps, with respect to the lady, not altogether delicate. But it is surely natural that I should be desirous to see the mother of the future Barrymores. From the lady my desire may be kept concealed; consequently no wound will be given to her delicacy. Her father, without any impropriety, may introduce her to your mother and sister as a friend; and I am sure he would not object to do so if he knew how ardently I wish it."

Edward conceived that it would be fruitless as well as cruel to oppose this strange fancy of his uncle. Besides, he was secretly pleased with the opportunity it afforded of soliciting Sir Francis to bring his daughter to this part of the country. "To the North," said he to himself, "my thoughts every day, every hour, every minute direct themselves. But if Ellen were here, I should not think of the North."

The next day he rode into the city, and stated simply to Sir Francis his uncle's request, together with its motives. Sir Francis made no hesitation in soliciting his daughter and O'Halloran to visit the metropolis, which they did in little more than a week afterwards. In a few days he drove them to Barrymount on a visit to the old Earl's, with whom he had of late become intimate.

Edward had received intelligence of the day on which they were to arrive. How did his heart beat with joyful impatience! He rose that morning earlier than usual, for he could not sleep. The day which he had thus rendered longer than ordinary, appeared to him preternaturally so. Many an anxious look he cast at his watch. "It will never be the afternoon," thought he. He was almost tempted to move the hands of the watch forward, but he reflected that such a measure would add no velocity to the wheels of Sir Francis's coach. He then tried to read, but it would not do. He then tried to walk, but it was equally vain. He next had recourse to writing a letter to Martin, but he dated it wrongly; took another sheet of paper, wrote "My dear sir," twice; and, in the first line, instead of the word "pleasure," wrote "perplexity;" and, in the second, for the words, "I learn you are still at home," he substituted, "I think she will surely soon come." He dashed the pen across the lines, execrated his stupidity, and gave it up as an impracticable task. He then threw himself on a sofa, and bravely determined, since he could not get rid of his impatience, to bear it like a man. He lay for about five minutes quiet enough, and then looked around. "Charlotte," said he to his sister, who was present, "Charlotte, my dear, what o'clock is it?"

"Why, Edward, you have asked me that question, I believe, ten times since breakfast."

"Is it two, my dear?"

"No, I believe it is scarcely one. But consult your watch."

"I have consulted it twenty times to-day; but I cannot think it right. It goes very slowly. Well, well, if it were two—and it wants but an hour and twenty minutes of it—it would then be only three hours till five.—But, Charlotte, won't you take a ride? I shall order the chaise."

"I shall go with you in an hour, Edward."

In short, they took their ride, met Sir Francis's coach, returned in company with it to the Earl's; and Edward's time, for about ten days, the duration of Ellen's visit, flew with the rapidity of a delicious dream.

It is needless to say that the Earl was well pleased when he beheld the lovely mother of the *future Barrymores.*

"Upon my honour," said he to Edward, the evening after Ellen had left them, "you are a happy young man. No wonder you spent so much time in the North, where you discovered such a beauteous flower ripening into perfection. If Providence would only spare me to behold your eldest son, I think that there might yet be attractions for me even in this world. But no, I must hasten to your father and my brother, to my God, his God, and your God."

Accordingly, in less than three weeks afterwards, he resigned his spirit into the hands of Him who made it, and his earthly remains were deposited amidst his kindred dust, alongside of his brother.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE deceased Earl had never possessed any children. His title, therefore, together with his immense property, devolved on Edward, who, in a very short period, took occasion, in company with his mother and sister, to visit the North, and lay them at the feet of Ellen.

"My lord," said she, as he warmly pressed for an immediate union, "it would be mere affectation in me to deny what you already know, that my heart pleads in your favour. But I am at my father's disposal, and must request you to wait till his consent be obtained in form."

"Then, my love, you may name the happy day," he replied; "for before I left Dublin, I obtained Sir Francis's promise that he would follow me here in a few days, to be present at our nuptials."

"Then, my lord," she answered, "when he comes, we may permit him to name it."

When she had said this, her countenance changed, she blushed deeply, and looking to the ground, almost burst into tears.

"What is the matter, my Ellen?" inquired the young earl, who was himself considerably agitated.

"Oh!" said she, "the word has passed my lips. I have committed my liberty into your hands. I cannot now recall it. The change is awful!"

"Surely, sweetest Ellen, you do not wish to recall it."

"No, my lord, otherwise I should not have said it. I have said it deliberately, willingly, and without scruple; but it brings to my mind the recollection of the freedom I have hitherto enjoyed, in parting with which I cannot help shedding a few natural tears. Besides, I cannot, without concern, contemplate the high responsibility of the station I am about to fill. Should I fail in any part of my duty—"

"My Ellen!" he interrupted her, "my treasure! be comforted. It is impossible that one of your goodness of heart and understanding can fail in any duty. As to the station, you will adorn it. You will be an example to our peeresses of all that is virtuous, lovely, dignified, and wise. In the eyes of your Edward, station cannot exalt you. He found you among these rocks, on this romantic shore, a jewel of perfection, valuable beyond all price; and such a one as, in his estimation, no change of scene or circumstance, neither humiliation nor exaltation, can alter. He will soon remove you to a more busy and brilliant sphere, where, while every eye admires your lustre, and every heart acknowledges your value, you will still be to him, as you have been here, the pride, the delight of his soul, the dearest part of himself."

But it would be tedious to detail the whole of this love conversation, which lasted nearly three hours, as every one in the castle, who knew they were together, felt unwilling to disturb them; and Mrs Brown had the good-nature to postpone making tea for a whole hour after the usual time, rather than interrupt their agreeable *tete a tete*. Tea was, however, at length got ready; and when the lovers were summoned to attend, they could scarcely be convinced that the old lady had not prepared it much earlier than usual. On their entering the parlour, Edward's sister maliciously consulted her watch.

"It is past seven o'clock," said she.

"Past seven o'clock!" cried his lordship. "Why, Charlotte, your watch must be wrong. I cannot suppose it to be more than five."

"That is owing to your having been in pleasant company," said she. "Time does not now lag with your lordship, as it did at Barrymount one day, when you insisted that it was two o'clock when it was hardly past twelve; and, in sheer pity, I had to drive away in a chaise with you, to try to make it move faster."

"Ah! Charlotte, you may now laugh; but I hope I shall yet have my revenge, by observing your little heart beating impatiently for the arrival of an esteemed friend."

"And a *dearly beloved* one too," added she with emphasis.

"Yes, my sister," said he; "and may he who can excite similar emotions in your heart be as worthy of love as the object who occasioned that day's impatience in mine!"

"Amen," she replied.

The tea-table was scarcely removed, when Miss Barrymore, looking from a window, exclaimed, "Why, my lord, I declare yonder is the old beggar woman you left an invalid on our hands, when you set off so hastily from Dublin in June last."

His lordship looked out, and beheld Peg Dornan advancing briskly up the avenue.

She had become perfectly convalescent, and had returned from Dublin during the time that Edward was employed in Cornwallis's army, and was now a fund of great entertainment to the whole neighbourhood for several miles round, by her inexhaustible description of the great city, and the great folks in it.

She was soon heard addressing one of the servants.

"I'm tauld he's come," said she, "an' I'll wait here till I see him, for I hae na cast an ee on him syne the day he left me in sic a hurry, in his faither's hoose, a perfect cripple, wi' my twa shanks as thick as butter-firkins, an' my feet blistered like broiled herrin's. An' the bit lassie, his sister—Gude bless her bonnie face. She gied me baith wine an' plenty o' sweetmeats every day, whilk was a great comfort to a puir body in a muckle wild toon sae far fra' hame."

"Old Peg has a good heart," said Edward. "I must go to speak with her."

O'Halloran went with him.

"Fare fa' you!" quoth she, making a low courtesy as soon as she saw them. "I may be owre bauld; but I wished to see his honour, wha, they tell me, is noo a young lord, yince mair."

"Well, Peg, how have you been since we parted?" asked his lordship.

"Weel enough for a poor body like me; but I'm still better noo since I see you whare you oucht to be; an' since I hear you're sune gaun to get wha' I aye thoucht you should get."

"Peg," replied Edward, "you have rendered us many and great services. I shall have a little cottage built for you, in which you can spend your old days in comfort."

"I thank you kindly," she said; "but you need na be at the pains. His honour there, my auld master an' frien', has already gi'en me a snug yin; an' he lets me besides hae a huntel o' siller every week; indeed mair than I ken weel what to do wi', for I can neither wear it, nor eat it; an' ye ken it wad na be richt to drink it. But, gin it wad na be

makin' owre free, I would like to see the bonny bairn, your sister, who was sae kind to me when I was a bedrill in Dublin."

At that instant Miss Barrymore made her appearance.

"My bonnie lady," said Peg, courtesying to her, "I was unco troublesome to you up the country, an' I just wanted to thank you, noo when I'm won back to my ain country."

"I'm glad to see you so stout, Peg," said the young lady.

"If it would na affront you," returned Peg, abruptly, "to tak' a gift frae an auld beggar wife, I would fain gie you a pretty thing I fan' among the stanes near the Point Rock yestreen, as I was saunterin' alang gathering limpets."

While saying this, she unfolded a piece of old rag, and presented to view a handsome gold brooch, set with diamonds, of great value. Edward instantly recognised it as one that he had lost when struggling with the waves on the evening which had so nearly proved fatal to him. His sister also knew it to be his.

"Why, Peg, you have been fortunate yesterday," said his lordship. "That brooch was once mine. It was valued at two hundred guineas, and you are entitled to that sum. How will you dispose of it?"

"Dispose of it! In trowth, I'll no dispose of it at all," she replied; "for I'll no hae't at all. Gin the breest-pin be yours, you maun get it. But I thoucht to pay the debt I owed to this bonnie lassie wi' it."

"She shall have it since you desire it," said his lordship; "but you must also derive some benefit from your good fortune in finding it. Mention anything I can do for you."

"Weel, since I think o't, maybe you'll no object to tak' Jock Dornan, my poor gomerill sin—but he's a sturdy chiel—into your service, an' try to mak' a man o' him, whilk is mair than ever his mither could."

"It shall be so," said his lordship; "and he shall be amply provided for. And now, Charlotte, you may take the brooch as a present from Peg."

"I shall," she said; "but Peg must receive from me, in return, a new bonnet and a new cloak every year."

"Whate'er you like," replied Peg. "I'll refuse naething o' that sort. But I'll awa an' sen' Jock Dornan to you in the morning. Guid een, an' the blessing o' an auld woman be wi' you a'."

When she was gone, O'Halloran informed his lordship that, after her return from Dublin, in consequence of her active instrumentality in saving his life, he felt himself bound to provide for her future comfort, and had given her a cottage, and settled on her a weekly allowance during her life, which, considering her careless and wandering disposition, he observed was a more effectual way of rewarding her, than by the actual donation of a more considerable sum of money, or a larger piece of property.

Edward being desirous to see M'Nelvin, O'Halloran and he walked to Jemmy Hunter's with the expectation of finding him there. It was a fine moonlight evening, about the middle of October. The grain harvest was all gathered in, and the country people had been busied during the day in raising and securing the potatoes; and, as our friends went along, they passed many *car-loads* of this wholesome and agreeable root, so precious to the Irish, on their way to the farm-houses. The peasantry were cheerful and civil, and seemed to have completely recovered their spirits after the late disastrous events.

On arriving at Jemmy Hunter's, all was quiet around the dwelling-house, for it was now dark, and candles were lighted within. After the capture of the French, Jemmy, whose habits of life were not formed for dependence on the great, and whose domestic attachments were too strong to permit his long continuance from his family, relinquished his situation under Sir Francis Hamilton, and returned home.

On Barrymore and O'Halloran approaching close to the house, the cheering sounds of rustic mirth and happiness saluted their ears. "Come here," said O'Halloran, who had advanced to the unscreened window of the apartment in which the contented group were sitting round a large blazing turf-fire, "Come here, my lord, and behold a true specimen of the winter-night enjoyments of our Northern peasantry."

Barrymore looked, and his heart swelled with joy to behold a number of as healthy, honest, and happy human countenances as any family group in Christendom could exhibit. Between the window and the fire-place sat four women, busily employed at the spinning-wheel, the chief engine of the Northern Irish industry and prosperity. These were Jemmy Hunter's mother, his two sisters, and his wife. On the other side of the hearth, in a large arm-chair, sat William Caldwell, who, from the staff in his hand, and the great-coat that hung loosely on his shoulders, appeared to have just come on an evening visit to his son-in-law. M'Nelvin, Jemmy Hunter, and a decent-looking young man, whom Barrymore did not know, but who, it will be no harm to suppose, was a suitor to one of the Misses Hunter, sat in front of the hearth; while on a long bench between the hearth and a stone wall, which ran across the apartment, sat two ruddy-faced youths, younger brothers to Jemmy, one of whom had the house-dog, which was of the large black species, called in that part of the country the "Collie," between his knees.

To some remark of M'Nelvin, which Edward did not hear, old Caldwell replied, "I'm very happy at the turn things hae ta'en; an, I'm sure a' the country will be rejoiced at it, for he's a guid youth."

"Father," said Jemmy, "Peggy can sing you yin o' the best sangs ye hae heard this lang time; an' it's a new yin. She gat it frae M'Nelvin here. I listened to her singing it last nicht, till I amaist grat, it touched me sae much. Come, Peggy, let your father hear it; it will do his heart guid."

After some little hesitation, Peggy complied, and sang as follows:—

"Oh! thousands shall mourn, and thousands shall fall,
And ruin shall light upon castle and hall;
And our chieftain shall forfeit his bonnie estate,
And be sentenced to die at his own castle gate;
And the Flower of the North her sire shall wail,
And the Pride of the South shall hear the tale,
And with speed shall hasten our chief to free,
For the sake of the Flower of the North country.

"'I fear not death,' our brave chieftain said;
'But my daughter is fair, and I fear for the maid:
To be friendless and lovely, are evils in store,
To work her misfortune, when I am no more.'
Then burst from her bosom the heart-breaking sighs,
And the tears fell fast from her lovely black eyes,
As she said to her father, 'O grieve not for me,
For, to peace, in the grave, I shall soon follow thee!'

"The guards move slow, for their errand is death,
While the foes of our chieftain are foaming with wrath
But the noble youth follows on mercy's swift wings,
And life and estate to our chieftain he brings.
Now the land rejoices, our bosoms beat high,
And maids and their lovers sing songs of joy;
For the Pride of the South soon married shall be
To Ellen, the Flower of the North country."

"Why, M'Nelvin," said Jemmy, clapping the poet on the knee when the song was ended, "you deserve a fairin' for making it. I wonder, man, hoo you can gar the words clink sae?"

But before the poet could reply, a rapping at the door drew the attention of the party.

"Come in, frien's," cried Jemmy, rising at the same time to open the door. The next moment Edward and O'Halloran advanced, and saluted the company. They all rose. The women made courtesies, and the men bows.

"Ah! how are you, M'Nelvin?" cried Edward, ardently shaking the poet by the hand. "Your friend, Sir Francis, sent his kind respects to you. I expect him to follow me here in a few days."

"My lord, I am really rejoiced to see you," replied the bard. "I need not say that the present prospects of both you and that best of my friends afford me much happiness."

Edward now turned to salute William Caldwell and the rest of the company. "Mr Caldwell," said he, "it gives me true pleasure to witness your good fortune, in being surrounded by such an amiable and happy group of relatives."

"We maun thank your lordship for some o' our happiness," replied the old man. "What you did for his honour there will no sune be forgotten amang us."

By this time Peggy had her neat little parlour lighted, and, with all the winning sweetness of rural modesty, invited her guests to step ben to it, as, she said, it was a decenter place for the like o' them than the kitchen, the apartment in which they had met.

A pitcher of warm whisky punch soon diffused its inspiring fumes through the room.

"How did you like the city, Jemmy?" asked Lord Barrymore. "You seemed very anxious to leave it."

"I liked it weel enough; an' had it no been for twa' folk, an' there is yin o' them," said he, pointing to his blushing Peggy, "an' the other is in the cradle yonder, I wadna hae left Sir Francis sae sune.—Peggy, bring here the wean till his lordship sees it. It's a bonnie bit thing, an' I hae ca'd it for you, my lord."

His spouse now, with an almost trembling fondness, produced the young Hunter to view.

"Eddy, Eddy!" cried its father, catching its little hand, "look up, my boy, an' see your namesake."

His lordship took the child in his arms. "It is a fine boy, Jemmy," said he; "its features are extremely like your own. I do not wonder that you were impatient to return to objects so attractive as such a wife and such a son. I thought, my friend, to add to your happiness for the many great services you have rendered me; but I find it impossible, for

these treasures make you happier than man can make you. Yet you will permit me to make my little namesake a present, in token of my esteem for its parents, and my affection for himself."

He then returned the child to its mother, and asked for writing materials, which being supplied, he drew forth a valuable gold watch, and cutting a piece of paper into a circular form, so as to fit the inside of the watch, wrote as follows:—

"Oct. 1798. The gift of Edward, Earl of Barrymore, to Edward Hunter. The earl hereby binds himself and his heirs for ever, to pay annually fifty pounds sterling to the said Edward Hunter and his heirs."

He enclosed the paper within the watch, and handing it to Peggy, "Receive this in trust for your child," said he. "It is but a small recompense for the numerous and important services his father has rendered to me, and those dear to me."

When Jemmy understood the nature of the gift, "Na, na," said he, "we'll no hae't: it is owre muckle, my lord. It was na for ony such thing that I helped you in your pinches. It was for mere frien'ship; an' I would hae done the same for ony frien' in the country."

"This disinterestedness," observed his lordship, "makes you still the more entitled to recompense. But if you will not receive this gift as a reward, you will gratify me by receiving it as a token of friendship, for I am proud of being capable of exciting such friendship as you have shown for me. Besides, Jemmy, it is scarcely in your power to refuse it, for it is not to you, but to your son, my young namesake here, that I give it."

"Weel, weel, gin it maun be sae, let it be sae," replied Jemmy. "But I think the young rascal has got owre mony presents already; for Miss O'Halloran has gien him hale trunkfu's o' claes an' ither things, mair, I believe, than we ken weel hoo to use. An I'll no hide it, though it is a secret she does na hersel' ken; it was mair to please her than to compliment ony body else, that we ca'd him Edward."

"Candidly confessed!" cried Lord Barrymore, much pleased with Jemmy's simplicity, but, at the same time, more delighted with the idea that Ellen had displayed such attention to a child that was named after himself.

"I canna weel tell what to think o' ye, gentlemen," remarked Jemmy, "Ye seem to care naething o' the warld's gear. His honour there, Mr O'Halloran, has gien me the farm rent free for ever, an' would insist on me that it was paying a debt he owed me, whereas I only did for either o' you what yae neighbour should be aye ready to do for anither. But let us hae anither glass. Wi' your leave, I'll drink lang life to you, Mr O'Halloran; an' lang life to your lordship, an' may ye sune be married to her ye like best!"

Having thanked Jemmy for his good wishes, and emptied their glasses to a toast expressive of theirs for him and his interesting family, O'Halloran and Lord Barrymore arose, and, accompanied by M'Nelvin and Jemmy, proceeded towards the castle.

On their way, the poet and his lordship having fallen somewhat behind their companions, "Mr M'Nelvin," said the latter, "the obligations I lie under to you, for your ardent and effective services in my behalf, and in that of those I love, demand my sincere acknowledgments, and embolden me to make a request, your compliance with which will afford me much satisfaction, as it will give me an opportunity of

making some return for the numerous favours you have conferred on me."

"Any service I have rendered your lordship," replied M'Nelvin, "brought with it its own reward, in the gratification I experienced in the performance; and if there be any I can yet render you, let me know it, and, with the same zeal and pleasure, it shall be done."

"In the county of Cavan," said his lordship, "I have an estate, the manager of which died a few months ago. I should like you to fill his place, for I want it filled with a man in whose honesty to myself, and attention to the comfort and happiness of my tenantry, I can confide. The compensation of the late agent was £500 per annum; yours shall be £800."

"I see, my lord, your motive for this generous offer," returned M'Nelvin. "You wish to make me independent as to worldly matters; and your friendship and delicacy have suggested this method. I thank you, sincerely do I thank you. But, my lord, my affections are rooted to this part of the country. The neighbourhood, for about ten miles round us, is all the world to me. It is all I ever enjoyed, or ever wish to enjoy. In an adjoining valley I had my birth; amidst these hills I was educated; everything that has interested me from the days of childhood to this very hour has appeared within these limits; and, if I were to remove from them, I should remove from that portion of the world, which could alone yield me enjoyment by interesting my affections. On your estate, I should feel as if I were exiled from my native land; and although it would yield me pleasure to afford you any assistance in my power in managing your affairs, yet, as I know that your lordship can sustain no injury by my present refusal, there being numerous individuals who would be thankful for such an employment, better qualified, both from experience and disposition to fulfil its duties, than I am, I decline your friendly offer with the less reluctance. My lord, while I refuse your kindness in this instance, I trust that you are too fully aware of the nature of my motives for so doing, to take them amiss. Indeed, I assure your lordship, that the governorship of one of the richest of his majesty's colonies would not tempt me to forego the pleasure of every day beholding my native hills and valleys: the pleasure of wandering, in my hours of meditation, along those streamlets, or concealing myself amidst those well-known groves and glens; or of enjoying, in my hours of sociability, the cheerful hospitality, and kindly, though rustic conversation, of those beloved friends and neighbours, to whom I have been long accustomed and endeared."

"Is there no other way, my romanticfriend," said his lordship, "by which I can manifest my gratitude for what you have done for me?"

"There is no other way," replied the poet, "than by continuing to favour me with your good opinion. As to pecuniary matters, they are of little or no consideration with me. I need but little, and that little I can easily earn. To possess more might only produce cares and perplexities with which I wish not to be encumbered. My days may be few or many, as Providence shall please to order; but they shall be spent in the indulgence of affections which wealth cannot excite, and in the enjoyment of those luxuries of mind it cannot purchase."

"Happy M'Nelvin!" exclaimed his lordship, "since you have thus the making of your own happiness, independent of the frowns or the

smiles of a fickle world! I shall not urge you further on this subject. But assure yourself of my lasting friendship and gratitude, and of my sincere wish that you may long live to enjoy the intellectual blessings of which you are enamoured, amidst the interesting scenery of your native vales, and in possession of the esteem and admiration of their honest inhabitants."

Having now arrived at the avenue to the castle, they separated, and the poet returned with Hunter to the rural dwelling of the latter, which had of late become his favourite place of residence.

CHAPTER XXVI.

As this history is drawing to a close, it may not be amiss to take notice of the great lesson for the inculcation of which it has been written; namely, that intimidation and vengeance are, and ever will be, unsuccessful in preserving the peace of a country; whereas conciliation and kindness will scarcely every fail.

The blood of martyrs has been truly said to be like seed to the cause for which they suffered; and perhaps, in no portion of the history of nations, has this truth been more clearly illustrated than in that we have just recited. The unnecessary, unjust, impolitic, and cruel execution of William Orr, almost instantaneously resulted in thousands of William Orrs, or rather of characters such as he was accused of being, starting into existence, and vowing revenge upon his persecutors.

While Cambden governed in Ireland, the system which occasioned that irritating execution was continued until it involved the country in all the horrors of which we have in the preceding pages given a faint sketch. How long these horrors would have continued, had he continued to govern, is happily now only matter of conjecture.

The realization of the evils, which the most enlightened statesmen of England and Ireland predicted would be the consequence of his coercive measures, brought at length conviction of their impropriety home to the minds of the British ministers; and he was suddenly and fortunately superseded in his office, by a man of a more enlightened understanding and a more humane temper. The almost immediate consequence of this happy change we have seen. In the course of a few months, rebellion was converted into submission, and disaffection into loyalty. With the restoration of the ordinary laws, confidence in the government, tranquillity, industry, and national prosperity, were also restored.

It is true that the flames of the civil war had been too extensive for its dying embers to be all at once extinguished, and amidst a numerous population, it could not be expected, but that some would fanatically continue to urge the prosecution of desperate measures, even after their abandonment by the general mass. Besides, the government, comparatively mild and merciful as it was, still displayed, in some instances, a harshness towards several proscribed individuals, which kept alive, for a considerable time, a soreness in the minds of many, who would otherwise have returned at once to their former habits and feelings of loyalty.

But as these unfortunate individuals, against whom the national authority continued to direct its vengeance with unabated rigour, were

all, in the course of some months, either taken and executed, or died in their coverts from the hardships they endured, or else found means to fly from the country, this course of irritation and danger became also, before the expiration of the year, removed. Indeed, about that period, so evidently had the majority of the North became loyal, that it seemed, by their conduct and expressions, as if a species of reaction had taken place in their feelings, and the government appeared so much convinced that these professions were sincere, that it scrupled not to entrust arms into the hands of thousands who had been active in the rebellion.

A species of military force denominated "Yeomanry," the members of which could not be taken out of their own country, were not liable to military law, and had the privilege of withdrawing whenever they pleased from the service, had been projected sometime previous to the insurrection, but on account of the general disaffection, had been joined but by few. Its ranks, however, were now swelled by multitudes, eager to evince their reawakened fidelity to the government, which was therefore soon enabled to withdraw the regular troops from the country, and despatch them against the foreign enemy.

It is true that, previous to the arrival of Cornwallis, and the adoption of healing measures, although the insurrection had been nearly suppressed, the minds of the people were still much agitated, and there existed in the country such causes of irritation, as would, in all probability have occasioned it to become once more a scene of bloodshed and terror; and, on the first favourable opportunity, there is scarcely a doubt that another *rising* would have taken place, if a period had not been put to Cambden's coercive system of government.

They know very little of the temper and feelings of men, especially of Irishmen, who suppose that the mere danger of losing life will compel them to look quietly on, while their friends are suffering, and they themselves are in the daily danger of suffering all the evils of a needless and relentless persecution. The persecutors may, it is true, by an overwhelming military power, enforce an occasional and temporary submission; but human fears commonly yield to resentment and exasperation; and although disunion, or want of warlike means, may deprive the persecuted of all hopes of success, their very despair, which will be thus excited, may become dreadful, perhaps fatal to their adversaries.

On the day following the occurrences related in the last chapter, Ellen's favourite and faithful friend, Miss Agnew, arrived at the castle. Ellen had sent for this young lady shortly after consenting that her father should name the wedding day, in order that she, who had shared so sensibly in her afflictions, should now have an opportunity of sharing in her joys. Into her bosom she poured all her feelings, her hopes, her joys, her wishes, her anxieties, the intensity of her love and admiration for the generous youth who had done so much for her, who already possessed her heart, and into whose keeping she, with so much fondness and delight, was so soon to commit her destiny. Then, with a species of transient fear, she would revert to the awful change that was about to take place in her situation, and the high responsibility as a wife, as a peeress, and, perhaps, as a mother, she was about to incur. Then, reflecting on her removal from the scenes and the friends of her youth, she would say—

"And when I am married, I must also reside at a distance from these

haunts, so endeared to me by a thousand recollections; and from my youthful friends; and from thee, too, Maria, the earliest and best beloved of them all, I must separate. But," she would add, "without my Edward, the enjoyment of friends, country, and everything else I have hitherto prized, could not make me happy. Ah! I feel that the possession of such a husband is worth every sacrifice. Oh, Maria! rejoice with your friend, for I am indeed happy! Heaven, in giving me him, gives me the highest boon earth can afford."

Miss Agnew would often rally her on these bursts of love and joy, but with such visible satisfaction in her looks, as showed that, in her heart, she rejoiced in her friend's happiness, and consequently contributed to increase it. It is not to be supposed that in these confidential conversations, the gallant, gay Charles Martin was altogether forgotten. Miss Agnew delighted to talk of him.

"I confess I love him," she would say. "He is so sweet in his looks, so tender in his manner, that, during the day, I can scarcely ever withdraw my thoughts from him; and during the night, I can do nothing but dream of him. But I hope I shall yet get the better of such folly. He wrote to my father lately, requesting permission to visit me, and the old man was silly enough to ask my opinion on the subject. I told him to act as he thought proper, for I would not have him, on my account, to forbid the coming of any respectable person to our house."

"We expect him here every day," said Ellen. "Lord Barrymore has written him an invitation to attend our marriage. I wish we could have a double wedding. What say you, Maria?"

"Hush!" cried Maria. "One uproar of the kind is enough at one time."

Thus passed several days, which, to our heroine, flew on the wings of love and friendship, when her father arrived, accompanied with Sir Philip Martin and his son Charles. It would be wrong to stop at present to describe the joyful welcome they received at the castle, for the reader must be impatient to come to the grand conclusion of the whole affair—the making our hero and heroine husband and wife.

The important day arrived sometime in the middle of November. The wedding garments were prepared, the wedding guests were invited, and the wedding feast was provided.—But hold! we must have no formal description of such trifles. They are unfashionable; and, in these days, anything unfashionable is as intolerable in a novel as in a drawing-room.

But it ought to be known that, on this occasion, O'Halloran regulated the proceedings according to his own fancy, which was somewhat old-fashioned. He accordingly managed it so that the whole scene was almost a repetition of what took place when he himself was married to Ellen's grandmother.

The party consisted of about twenty-four persons, comprising a tolerably well proportioned assortment of males and females. Among the former, as a most essential personage on the occasion, was the Rev. Mr Nichols, who was O'Halloran's spiritual teacher, and with whose character the reader has already had some acquaintance.

At about five in the afternoon, the company sat down to a very comfortable dinner, after partaking of which, at the usual time the ladies withdrew, and the gentlemen remained behind, perhaps so long that each had a reasonable time to drink two glasses of port, and one goblet of

Jamaica rum punch. Some then betook themselves to backgammon, some to the library, and some to the ladies for amusement.

"Why, this was only an ordinary dinner! What appearance of a wedding is there in all this?"

Have patience, dear reader. We are not yet come to the wedding. But I trust we soon shall, although O'Halloran must have his own old jog-trot way. Great people do things of this kind far more dashingly now-a-days—that is, when their fathers and mothers or guardians happen to give their consent. They roll to church and back again, with a long, splendid train of carriages behind them, driving with as much velocity as if they had lost their senses, or were running for a wager, causing the streets and highways to tremble, and the gaping multitude to stare with astonishment, as they pass along. But O'Halloran was none of those dashing people; and as to Lord Barrymore, provided the knot was made firm and legal, he cared not how small a degree of pomp and pageantry attended the tying of it. He wanted his Ellen to be his wife; and if the forms that made her so were agreeable to both divine and human laws, the mere embellishing accompaniments were to him matters of indifference. But let us "haste to the wedding."

At about seven o'clock the whole party assembled to tea in the usual sitting-room. The task of presiding at this repast was assigned to Miss Agnew, as Ellen's thoughts were supposed to be too much occupied with more important concerns to undertake it. She sat at Miss Agnew's right hand. Her lover sat beside her, and attended to all her wants with punctilious delicacy and solicitude. Ah! is there a youth in Christendom who would not have envied his situation?

After the tea-table was removed, and the company promiscuously seated around the room, while all, except the lovers, who, engrossed in mutual fondness, sat beside each other on a sofa, were engaged in a lively desultory conversation, O'Halloran whispered something to Sir Francis, who, immediately rising, advanced to his daughter. The clergyman perceiving what was intended, rose also, and standing behind a large arm-chair on which he had been sitting, pronounced the words, "Let us proceed!" At once the whole company stood up. Sir Francis then led his blushing daughter, accompanied by her lover, forward, saying, "I here bestow you, my Ellen, upon a man whom I think, in every respect, worthy of such a gift. Receive her, my lord, and may God bless you both!"

With a graceful bow, and an exulting heart, the young lord received possession of the long-loved maid thus presented to him, and the two stood before the clergyman. That holy man then proceeded with the ceremony, according to the form observed by the reverend ministers of the Synod of Ulster, being nearly the same as that prescribed by the Church of Scotland. After some appropriate observations on the nature and design of the institution of marriage, and the duties and obligations which it imposes on the parties who engage in it, he administered to our lovers those solemn vows, whose miraculous power can form two into one; and having declared them to be husband and wife, he addressed Heaven in a short prayer suited to the occasion, and concluded by desiring Lord Barrymore to embrace his wife.

"My wife! O blessed sound!" thought the young bridegroom, as, with an enraptured heart, he imprinted the ardent embrace on her glowing lips.

After spending a reasonable time in courtship, Charles Martin followed the example of his friend Barrymore, and, in due form, exchanged matrimonial vows with the sprightly and laughter-loving Miss Agnew.

It is unnecessary to pursue the history of these personages farther. It may be mentioned, however, that the *Insurgent Chief* lived to see several of his great-grandchildren, and then calmly withdrew to his fathers, leaving behind him a memory which will be long honoured by the warm-hearted people of the romantic country, for whose independence he had, in vain, contended so bravely, and suffered so much.

DUNN AND WRIGHT, PRINTERS, GLASGOW.